

An Evaluation of the Impact of Nurture Provision upon Young Children, Including their Language and their Literacy Skills.

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A programme of independent study resulting in the production of a thesis to partially fulfil the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology.

University of East London
School of Psychology
Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is appended.

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Abstract

Nurture groups are a form of educational provision to support children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Their main aim is to provide children with the basic social and emotional skills, in order to facilitate learning, through the development of secure attachments in an educational setting (Boxall, 2002; Cooke, Yeomans & Parkes, 2008). The evidence base pertaining to nurture groups in relation to learning and academic outcomes remains relatively limited. A review of the literature highlighted the lack of previous research investigating the impact of nurture groups upon children's language development, whilst access to the child's voice remained limited. This research aimed to evaluate the impact of newly established, variant nurture groups upon a group of young children, including their language and literacy skills. In addition, the researcher used a range of methods in order to access the views of these children to assist in fully understanding the impact of nurture groups.

Undertaken from a Critical Realist position, this evaluation study employed a mixed-methods design to consider both the outcomes and processes pertaining to nurture groups and academic outcomes. Quantitative measures were utilised to consider the effects of nurture groups upon children's language and literacy skills, collected both upon entry to the nurture group and again eight months later. For this aspect of the research data was collected from 16 participants, accessing two different nurture groups and ranging in age from 5 years and 9 months to 9 years and 2 months. To contextualise the data, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the children, to explore their experiences of nurture groups and support understanding of the intervening processes affecting children's learning. A total of 8 participants, half of the original cohort, contributed to this phase. Four participants were drawn from each school and the final sample consisted of three girls and five boys, drawn from key stages one and two.

Findings demonstrated that the children's language and literacy skills showed improvement following access to the nurture group. Whilst this was not always

at a significant level, some progress was evident, although the results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and the variance within the group. The qualitative data provided further evidence to support these results, identifying that children perceived a positive impact upon their language and literacy skills, whilst a change was also apparent in their confidence and their readiness to learn. Supportive and valued features of the nurture groups were identified which can be linked to key elements of the provision, suggesting the importance of developing attachment relationships and social interaction for facilitating learning. The findings are important in highlighting the potential of nurture groups for improving academic attainment alongside social and emotional development and Educational Psychologists are well placed to encourage understanding of the role of nurture groups in laying the foundations for learning, supporting schools to develop nurture groups as an effective provision for children with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Contents Page

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Table of Abbreviations	xii
Key Terminology	xiii
List of Appendices	xv

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction		
1.1	Chapter Overview	1
1.2	Research Overview	1
1.3	Research Rationale	1
1.4	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	2
1.5	The National U.K. Context for this Research	3
	1.5.1 Nurture Groups as a Provision	5
	1.5.2 Language, Learning and Nurture Groups	10
1.6	The Local Context	11
1.7	Research Aims	12
1.8	The Researcher's Position	13
1.9	Relevance to Professional Practice	14
1.10	Summary of Chapter One	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review		
2.1	Chapter Overview	15
2.2	The Review Process	15

2.3	Nurture Groups and their Impact on Behaviour.	17
2.4	Nurture Groups and Language Development	19
2.5	Nurture Groups and Academic Outcomes	21
	2.5.1 Quantitative Methodologies	22
	2.5.2 Qualitative Methodologies	23
	2.5.3 Research using Mixed-methods	24
	2.5.4 A Summary of the Research Surrounding NGs and Academic Outcomes	25
2.6	Children's Views of Nurture Groups	26
2.7	Theoretical Framework	29
	2.7.1 Attachment Theory	29
	2.7.2 Nurture Groups and Attachment Theory	31
2.8	The Current Study	32
2.9	Summary of Chapter Two	33
Chapter Three: Methodology and Data Collection		
3.1.	Chapter Overview	34
3.2	Research Aims, Background and Purpose	34
3.3	Epistemological Position	35
3.4	Mixed-Methods Research	37
	3.4.1 Rationale for Employing Mixed-Methods	37
3.5	The Quantitative Aspect of the Research Project	39
	3.5.1 Participant Selection	39
	3.5.2 The Nurture Group Interventions	47
	3.5.3 Measures and Procedures	52
	3.5.4 Data Analysis	58
3.6	The Qualitative Aspect of the Research Project	59
	3.6.1 Participant Selection	59
	3.6.2 Measures and Procedures	59
	3.6.3 Data Analysis	64
	3.6.4 Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Data	70

3.7	Ethical Considerations	71
3.8	Summary of Chapter Three	72
Chapter Four: Research Findings		
4.1	Chapter Overview	73
4.2	Findings from the Quantitative Data Analysis	73
	4.2.1 Assessment of Children's Language Skills	74
	4.2.2 Assessment of Children's Literacy Skills	82
	4.2.3 Summary of Quantitative Findings	91
4.3	Findings from the Qualitative Data Analysis	92
	4.3.1 Children's Views About Attending the Nurture Group	95
	4.3.2 Children's Views about Whether the Nurture Group helped their Language and Literacy Skills.	110
	4.3.3 Summary of Qualitative Findings.	134
4.4	An Overview of the Research Findings.	135
4.5	Summary of Chapter Four	136
Chapter Five: Discussion		
5.1	Chapter Overview	137
5.2	Summary of the Main Findings	137
5.3	Discussion of the Main Findings	139
	5.3.1 Do Measures of Children's Language Skills Show Improvement Following Access to the Nurture Group?	139
	5.3.2 Do Measures of Children's Literacy Skills Show Improvement Following Access to the Nurture Group?	142
	5.3.3 What are the Children's Views about Attending the Nurture Group?	145
	5.3.4 What are the Children's Views about whether the Nurture Group helped their Language and Literacy?	148
5.4	An Overview of the Findings in Light of Attachment Theory.	152

5.5	Limitations of the Research Findings and Implications for Future Research	155
	5.5.1 Sampling	155
	5.5.2 Data Collection	156
	5.5.3 Intervention Delivery	159
	5.5.4 Generalisability	160
	5.5.5 Summary	160
5.6	Implications for Education and Educational Psychology.	160
5.7	Reflections	163
5.8	Conclusion	164
	References	166
	Appendices	189

List of Tables

Table Number	Table Name	Page Number
Table 1.1	'Classic' Boxall Guidelines	7
Table 1.2	Nurture Group Principles	9
Table 3.1	The Participant Sampling Process	44
Table 3.2	Characteristics of the Final Participant Sample	46
Table 3.3	A Summary of the Characteristics of the Nurture Group Provisions	48-50
Table 3.4	The Interview Process	64
Table 3.5	The Stages of Thematic Analysis	68-69
Table 4.1	CCC-2 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Pre/Post-Intervention	75
Table 4.2	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for CCC-2 Data	77
Table 4.3	Language Link Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Pre/Post-Intervention	79
Table 4.4	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for Language Link Data	81
Table 4.5	Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the WRAT4 Pre/Post-Intervention	83
Table 4.6	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for WRAT4 Data	86
Table 4.7	Details of the Children Participating in the Individual Interviews	92

List of Figures

Figure Number	Figure Name	Page Number
Figure 3.1	A Diagram to Show the Timing and Weighting of the Mixed-Methods Approach.	39
Figure 3.2	Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Organisation of Experience Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.	41
Figure 3.3	Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Internalisation of Controls Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm	42
Figure 3.4	Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Self-Limiting Features Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.	42
Figure 3.5	Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Undeveloped Behaviour Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm	43
Figure 3.6	Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Unsupported Development Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.	43
Figure 3.7	Gender Composition and Year Group of the Participating Children.	47
Figure 3.8	A Comparison of School Attendance Data for Participants, Prior to and Following Nurture Group Access.	56
Figure 4.1	CCC-2 Mean Scores Pre and Post NG	76
Figure 4.2	Boxplots of Communication Composite Scores	78
Figure 4.3	Language Link Mean Scores Pre and Post NG	80
Figure 4.4	Boxplots of Language Link Standard Scores	81
Figure 4.5	Word Reading Mean Scores Pre and Post NG	84
Figure 4.6	Spelling Mean Scores Pre and Post NG	84
Figure 4.7	Sentence Comprehension and Reading Composite Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.	85
Figure 4.8	Boxplots of Word Reading Standard Scores	87
Figure 4.9	Boxplots of Spelling Standard Scores	88

Figure 4.10	National Curriculum Reading Levels Pre/Post-Intervention	90
Figure 4.11	National Curriculum Writing Levels Pre/Post-Intervention	90
Figure 4.12	A Thematic Map of the Main Themes and Sub-Themes Identified from Children's Views about Attending the Nurture Groups	96
Figure 4.13	A Thematic Map of Theme One: Within Child Factors	97
Figure 4.14	A Thematic Map of Theme Two: External Factors	103
Figure 4.15	A Thematic Map of the Overarching Themes Regarding Children's Views about Whether the Nurture Group helped their Language and Literacy Skills.	111
Figure 4.16	A Thematic Map of Theme One: Views about Impact	112
Figure 4.17	A Thematic Map of Theme Two: Supportive Features of the Nurture Group	116
Figure 4.18	A Thematic Map of Theme Three: Further Support	123
Figure 4.19	A Thematic Map of Theme Five: Confidence	129
Figure 4.20	Children's Scaled Scores for Reading	132
Figure 4.21	Children's Scaled Scores for Writing	132
Figure 4.22	Children's Scaled Scores for Talking to Others	133
Figure 4.23	Children's Scaled Scores for Keeping Quiet/Listening	133

Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
BIOS	Behavioural Indicators of Self Esteem
BP	Boxall Profile
BPS	British Psychological Society
CCC2	Children's Communication Checklist
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
IWM	Internal Working Model
LA	Local Authority
LL	Language Link
NCLs	National Curriculum Levels
NG	Nurture Group
NGN	Nurture Group Network
NIHCE	National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
RQ	Research Question
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SEBD	Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
TA	Thematic Analysis
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
U.K.	United Kingdom
WRAT	Wide Range Achievement Test

Key Terminology

Below are listed definitions for some of the key terms used in this thesis in order to support the reader's understanding.

Nurture Group

The term 'nurture group' is used throughout this thesis given that this was the intervention which was evaluated. The Nurture Group Network identify that a nurture group is 'a small group of 6 to 10 children usually based in a mainstream educational setting and staffed by two supportive adults. Nurture groups offer a short-term, focussed, intervention strategy, which addresses barriers to learning arising from social/emotional and or behavioural difficulties, in an inclusive, supportive manner. Children continue to remain part of their own class group and usually return full time within 4 terms. Central to the philosophy is attachment theory; an area of psychology which explains the need for any person to be able to form secure and happy relationships with others' (Nurture Group Network, 2013, www.nurturegroups.org/pages/what-are-nurture-groups.html 'who we are'). The nurture groups evaluated as part of this research adhered to the points outlined and therefore this was deemed to be an appropriate description of the term.

Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties

For the purposes of this research the definition provided by the special educational needs code of practice (DfES, 2001) is used to clarify the term social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This defines children with such difficulties as those who 'demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration; those with immature social skills; and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs' (p.87). Although the code of practice currently classifies such difficulties as behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), this research utilises the term social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in recognition that the social and the emotional often lead to the behaviour, and also in line with the terminology of more recent years. Interestingly, the indicative draft of the new code of practice (DfE, 2013) suggests that the title may instead become emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD), to move the focus away from the behaviour.

Inclusive

The term 'inclusive' is used within this thesis to refer to the fact that the nurture group is based in and is fully part of the children's mainstream neighbourhood school. The group functions as an integral part of the school and the teacher's responsibilities are therefore to create an integrated experience for the child that includes the school world beyond the group, in order that they can see and make possible relationships in wider contexts (Boxall, 2002).

Outcome

The term 'outcome' is used within this research to refer to the effects and effectiveness of the intervention. It is seen as measuring how far the intervention met its objectives or goals.

Process

The term 'process' is used to refer to what is happening in the intervention. It is seen to identify the intervening processes which may be responsible for any change observed and to support understanding of the intervention.

Holistic Curriculum

The Nurture Group Network provide the following definition for the holistic curriculum offered in nurture groups: 'a holistic curriculum incorporates the National Curriculum with a curriculum designed to address the social, emotional and behavioural factors underpinning academic learning'. (Nurture Group Network, 2011, p. 25)

List of Appendices

Appendix Number	Appendix Name	Page Number
Appendix 1	Results of the Systematic Literature Review	190
Appendix 2	An Overview of the Research Procedure.	192
Appendix 3	The Script and Associated Prompts for Children's Interviews	196
Appendix 4	Materials to Support Children's Interviews	200
Appendix 5	Letter of Ethical Approval	203
Appendix 6	Parent Information Leaflet	204
Appendix 7	Parent Consent Form	207
Appendix 8	Children's Information Leaflet	208
Appendix 9	Children's Consent Form	209
Appendix 10	Head Teacher Information Leaflet	211
Appendix 11	Head Teacher Consent Form	214
Appendix 12	National Curriculum Level and P Scale Conversions	215
Appendix 13	The Researcher's Codebooks	216
Appendix 14	A Coded Transcript	221
Appendix 15	A Thematic Map for Section One of Children's Interviews	232
Appendix 16	A Thematic Map for Section Two of Children's Interviews	233
Appendix 17	Collated Data Extracts for the Subordinate Subtheme 'Sad that it's Ending'.	234
Appendix 18	Children's Suggested Improvements to the Nurture Groups.	235

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

Chapter one introduces this research which investigated the impact of Nurture Groups (NGs) upon young children, with a focus on their language and literacy skills. Initially, a summary of the research and the rationale behind the project is provided. Subsequently, the term social, emotional, behavioural difficulties (SEBD) is considered to support understanding of the children accessing NGs. The national and local contexts surrounding the research are then discussed, leading into the project's aims. Finally, the relevance of the research to the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) is considered.

1.2 Research Overview

This research sought to evaluate the impact of NGs on a small sample of primary-aged children in a local authority (LA) in the U.K. The provisions were newly established and supported by the EPS. Of particular interest was the impact of NGs upon children's educational attainment, and more specifically their language and literacy skills. Robson (2002) makes the distinction between outcome and process evaluation. Whilst outcome evaluation assesses the effects and effectiveness of the intervention, process evaluation considers what is happening in the intervention, the intervening processes which may be responsible for any change observed. This study considered both outcomes and processes, therefore employing a range of measures to explore impact. These included quantitative measures to review children's language and literacy skills, and qualitative measures to explore children's experiences of NGs, both more generally and relative to language and literacy development.

1.3 Research Rationale.

There is a growing research body (for example, Copper & Tiknaz, 2005; Gerrard, 2006; Reynolds Mackay & Kearney, 2009) which has explored the use of NGs as an inclusive intervention for children with SEBD. However, studies have tended to focus upon children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes (for example, Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; O' Connor and Colwell, 2002; Doyle, 2005). Though NGs provide a holistic curriculum; addressing the social and emotional factors underpinning learning, whilst incorporating the

National Curriculum (Nurture Group Network (NGN), 2011), research investigating the attainment of children accessing NGs is limited. A review of the literature highlighted the need for further quantitative methods to measure the effects of NGs on attainment. The importance of qualitative methodology was also acknowledged in order to explore the processes which may support or hinder children's development and improve understanding of the intervention's impact.

The findings outlined above, coupled with the results of a recent Ofsted (2011) survey, suggest the need for further research exploring NGs and academic outcomes. Ofsted (2011) found that although the most successful NGs emphasised social, emotional and behavioural development alongside developing skills in literacy and numeracy, their academic profile was overshadowed. This led them to recommend that schools ensure children accessing NGs make academic as well as social and emotional progress. Therefore, there is the need to further explore NGs as a provision for children with SEBD, to both provide evidence of their effect upon children's learning and to consider the processes that influence academic success in NGs.

1.4 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

For the purpose of this research the term SEBD is used to acknowledge the difficulties faced by children accessing NGs, in recognition that the 'social' and the 'emotional' often lead to the behaviour. However, the preferred title of such difficulties continues to vary. Whilst current legislation employs the title behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (BESD) (DfES, 2001), the SEN code of practice indicative draft (DfE, 2013) has suggested that this may become 'ESBD'. Similarly, an exact definition of SEBD continues to be debated with the view that it is an umbrella term which is difficult to define (Hamill & Boyd, 2000; Head, 2005). What is deemed to be an emotional, social or behavioural difficulty in one context might not be in another, as:

'Perception of challenging behaviour is relative and is conditioned by both the context in which the behaviour occurs and by the observer's expectations' (Ofsted, 2005, p.6).

This issue is further compounded because such difficulties lie on a continuum (DfE, 1994).

The current definition within legislation defines children with such difficulties as those who:

‘demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration; those with immature social skills; and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from other complex special needs’ (SEN code of practice, 2001, p.87).

Whilst the process of identifying a child with SEBD may therefore be seen as subjective given the presenting difficulties, it is not uninformed. Rather, there is a growing inclination towards interactionist explanations which consider factors in interplay including the individual, family, environment, and social context (Cooper, 1996, Mowatt, 2009). As such SEBD may be seen, not as a constant, but subject to environmental changes (Macleod & Munn, 2004). Therefore, appropriate intervention may support children to overcome their difficulties, as evidence has suggested is possible (Allen, 2011).

1.5 The National UK Context for this Research.

Children with SEBD continue to present a major concern for both practitioners and policy makers, primarily due to the potential impact of their difficulties upon school achievement and general health (NIHCE, 2008). The impact of such difficulties in childhood upon functioning in adulthood is widely reported in the literature, with links to mental health problems and increased rates of anti-social behaviour (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Green, McGinnity, Meltzer, Ford & Goodman, 2005). Whilst concerns regarding underachievement are evident in the Government’s Green Paper (DfEE, 1997), which urged schools to improve pupil performance in basic skills areas to:

‘Forestall the emergence of emotional and behavioural difficulties in many children who might develop EBD as a consequence of early failure at school’ (DfEE, 1997, p.79).

Children with SEBD can prove challenging, as they are entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum (DfEE, 1999; DfES, 1998), but tend to experience significant difficulties with their learning (DfE, 1994), whilst behavioural difficulties place them at risk of school exclusion (DfEE, 1997; Frederickson & Cline, 2009). Consequently, there is increasing recognition that early intervention to support children's emotional and social needs is important for ensuring health and well-being, but also for encouraging their readiness to learn and therefore for preventing further maladjustment (Allen, 2011; DfES, 2004b).

The importance of early identification and intervention for children with SEN continues to be recognised within U.K. government policy. The 2011 Green paper (DfE) states that identifying children's support needs early is essential in allowing them to thrive. This draws on evidence from Graham Allen's (2011) report 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps' which highlighted the importance of early intervention for children, families and the wider society. Allen (2011) particularly highlights the importance of ensuring that children have a basic foundation of social and emotional skills, to ensure that they are 'school ready' and 'life ready'. He identifies that children may have missed out on basic skills due to adverse early experiences or poor parenting. Allen (2011) argues that early intervention can encourage: social interaction; learning and development; attainment and achievement. He further suggests that such intervention can reduce anti-social behaviour, improve health, increase attainment and reduce the need for alternative educational provision.

With the emphasis on early intervention (Allen, 2011; DfE, 2011; DfEE 1997), many schools have adopted practices to support children's social and emotional development, aiming to support inclusion, improve behaviour management and increase attainment (Evans, Harden & Thomas, 2004). Some have utilised the cognitive/behavioural programmes, including the Self-Discovery Programme (Cullen-Powell & Barlow, 2005) and the FRIENDS intervention (Stallard et al 2005). Others have employed whole class and school approaches, such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme (SEAL) (DfES, 2005b). The provision of nurturing environments to re-establish children's emotional

stability have also been trialled (King & Chantler, 2002; Renwick & Spalding, 2002). Whilst, the initiatives outlined have been found to impact positively upon children, change appears relatively small and is often more apparent in supporting self-esteem and social difficulties (Cullen-Powell & Barlow, 2002; Spalding, 2000). In contrast, NGs evolved in response to the needs of extremely vulnerable children, with high levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties (Boxall, 2002). They offer more frequent and intensive support, providing opportunity for greater and maintained behaviour changes.

1.5.1: Nurture Groups as a Provision.

It has been found that NGs can positively support children with SEBD in a mainstream school setting (Colwell & O' Connor, 2003). In 1997, the Green Paper (DfEE) gave national prominence to NGs as an inclusive practice in U.K. schools. More recently Ofsted (2009) found that using NGs effectively enabled schools to avoid exclusion, whilst a further report recognised both their social/emotional and academic benefits (Ofsted, 2011).

NGs were first introduced as a form of educational provision in the 1970's by Marjorie Boxall, for children unable to function at an age-appropriate level in school, both socially and cognitively, as a result of impoverished early nurturing (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). She hypothesised that children's emotional instability resulted in part from a lack of basic skills and was displayed as challenging behaviour, often in response to the seemingly overwhelming demands of the classroom (Boxall, 2002). NGs aim to address the underlying causes of SEBD, attending to key developmental and relational features. Therefore, they seek to provide children with the basic social and emotional skills, in order to facilitate learning, through the development of secure attachments in an educational setting (Boxall, 2002; Cooke, Yeomans & Parkes, 2008). With the belief that difficulties stem from impoverished early experiences their aim is to:

'Create the world of earliest childhood in school and through this build in the basic and essential learning experiences..... and so enable the children to participate fully in the mainstream class' (Boxall, 2002, p. 1).

NGs as originally devised by Marjorie Boxall are a school based learning environment for children who:

‘Have a history of early developmental impairment and loss, and their common need is for restorative learning experiences’. (Boxall, 2002, p.3)

Boxall (2002) felt that these children had not managed to adequately secure the first stage of learning which takes place during the early years of childhood and which she believed develops through close and trusting relationships. The provision therefore aims to combine features of a caring home environment with formal curricular demands, to provide an educational bridge towards full-time placement in the mainstream classroom (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). Boxall’s original conception was of a comfortable environment, with close and intimately supportive relationships. A classic ‘Boxall’ nurture group is therefore based in a room which contains kitchen and dining facilities alongside soft furnishings and a carpeted area (Boxall, 2002). Such facilities help to support the early developmental needs of children within the provision and provide appropriate learning opportunities, for example allowing for the development of social skills and self-help skills during dining opportunities (Boxall, 2002; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). In effect, therefore, NGs are temporarily separated transitional settings which draw children from the mainstream classroom (Colwell & O’Connor, 2003). Although, it should be noted, they are still part of a whole school approach. That is NGs should not stigmatise the children who attend, as strong links are maintained with the mainstream class and children usually return full-time to their mainstream class after 2-4 terms of regular attendance (Binnie & Allen, 2008). The classic ‘Boxall’ nurture group is designed as a resource for up to ten children (Nurture Group Network, 2013a), which should be staffed by two adults; whose interactions are designed to model positive cooperation and social interaction to the children (Boxall, 2002; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007).

NGs as originally conceived by Boxall were designed to have an explicit and predictable daily routine offering children a structured environment (Boxall, 2002). This should include periods of National Curriculum focus, programmed activities such as free play and structured activities, and dining experiences. In

this way NGs provide a holistic curriculum incorporating the National Curriculum with a curriculum designed to address social, emotional and behavioural factors (Boxall, 2000). They should be driven by individual developmental needs and the children are supported in meeting learning goals using a step by step process (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006; Nurture Group Network, 2011). This is achieved by providing relevant experiences at an appropriate level to sustain attention, differentiating and organising experiences for the children, and building upon their competence through the hierarchical development of concepts and skills (Boxall, 2002). These features: the inclusive nature of the provision; the maintained links with the mainstream class; the modelling of social skills and relationships and the holistic curriculum constitute the general guidelines of a classic 'Boxall' NG, as outlined in the table below:

	The Classic 'Boxall' Nurture Group Guidelines
1.)	NGs are an inclusive form of educational provision for children within a mainstream setting.
2.)	Children remain on their mainstream class roll and usually register in class.
3.)	The expectation is that children return to their class group within two to four terms.
4.)	Children attend regular sessions, often for a substantial part of the day.
5.)	Groups are staffed by two adults who model good relationships.
6.)	The NG provides a holistic curriculum, incorporating the National Curriculum with one designed to address the social, emotional and behavioural factors underpinning academic learning.

Table 1.1: 'Classic' Boxall Guidelines (Nurture Group Network, 2011, p.25)

These guidelines were devised by the Nurture Group Network (2011) to reflect Boxall's original conception of the provision, as in recent years many different types of NGs have begun to emerge (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Whilst many of the new NGs are based upon the principles and practice underpinning the classic model, they

differ in organisation and structure (Nurture Group Network, 2011). For example, they may run for a reduced number of sessions, cater for students of secondary school age or serve a cluster of schools. In contrast, other provisions may depart from the philosophical features of Boxall's original conception and are therefore misnamed (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) provide evidence of this overall picture of NGs. They identified four varieties of NG provision in operation:

- Classic 'Boxall' NGs (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000).
- NGs which adhere to the original model's core guidelines/principles but which differ in structure/organisational features i.e. 'variant groups'.
- Groups labelled as NGs but which do not conform to Boxall principles.
- Groups labelled as NGs but which undermine the Boxall Principles.

As it is likely that different models will yield different outcomes, it is important to be aware of the models relating to particular research to attribute efficacy to the appropriate model. For example, Binnie and Allen (2008) found that a part-time model (variant NG) could also produce a positive change to children's social, emotional and behavioural skills. Thus, their research suggests that 'variant groups' can produce effects akin to 'classic Boxall nurture groups'.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) have found that NGs established for more than two years are significantly more effective. They discovered that whilst newly established NGs produced a positive change in children's behaviour, those in established groups demonstrated behavioural improvements at a statistically significant level. This suggests that a NG's effectiveness improves with time which again has implications when evaluating the evidence base.

The current research focused upon children placed in newly established NGs. Furthermore, they were of the type described by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) as 'variant groups', as opposed to classic 'Boxall' NGs. The provisions adhered to the original model's core guidelines as outlined previously (see table 1.1). For example:

- The children attended a NG within their mainstream setting.

- The provision was staffed by two adults.
- The children remained on their mainstream class roll.
- They attended regular sessions.
- They had access to a holistic curriculum.
- The expectation also remained that the children would return to their mainstream class, with progress monitored by staff using the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998).

They also adhered to the six principles of NGs (as outlined in table 1.2) which were devised by the Nurture Group Network. The aim of the principles is to help embed attachment theory within the intervention and support provisions in encapsulating nurture group theory and practice (Lucas, Insley and Buckland, 2006). They underpin the organisation, context and curriculum.

	Nurture Group Principles
1.)	Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2.)	The nurture group class offers a secure base.
3.)	Nurture is important for self-esteem.
4.)	Language is a vital means of communication.
5.)	All behaviour is communication.
6.)	Transition is important in children's lives.

Table 1.2: Nurture Group Principles (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006).

This was achieved through actions such as: the differentiation of learning materials; the search for the purpose behind a child's behaviour in order to aid understanding; the introduction of routines to support transitions; and an encouragement of the use of language within the group.

However, the key difference between the provisions evaluated within this research and the classic 'Boxall' NGs lay in their structure/ organisational features. More specifically, whilst they were based upon the principles and

guidelines underpinning the classic/original model and thereby upheld the NG philosophy, they ran on a part-time basis. Therefore, they were classified as 'variant groups'.

The evidence base for NGs, both of the classic and variant format, continues to grow with findings from both small-scale (Bishop & Swain, 2000; Doyle, 2005) and large-scale studies (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; IsZatt & Wasilewska, 1997) suggesting that children can experience social, emotional and behavioural gains. More recently, U.K. schools have demonstrated an increasing commitment to NGs with the Nurture Group Network (NGN) currently aware of over 1,500 groups across the U.K. (NGN, 2013a). Possible reasons for this include: recognition of their good practice (DfEE, 1997; OFSTED, 2009) and increasing rates of pupil exclusions (Castle & Parsons, 1998; OFSTED, 2009). Thus, a context is provided in which NGs are well placed to support vulnerable children within mainstream schools.

1.5.2: Language, Learning and Nurture Groups

Whilst NGs incorporate the National Curriculum (NGN, 2001), the evidence base surrounding NGs and attainment is much smaller. Research relating to academic progress has, however, become more prevalent in recent years, (for example; Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009; Sanders, 2007; Scott and Lee, 2009; Seth-Smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy & Jaffey 2010) and has presented findings demonstrating that NGs can support children's attainment and assist progress (see chapter two).

Given the link between SEBD and learning difficulties which is reflected in government documents (DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2001), and confirmed by researchers and authors (Mowat, 2009, Smith & Cooper, 1996), the researcher would argue that attainment is an important consideration of any educational provision supporting children with SEBD. This opinion is supported by Farrell, Critchley and Mills (1999) who found that children with SEBD in special schools presented with numeracy and literacy problems. They argue that in addition to providing a therapeutic approach, schools also have a responsibility to educate children in the basic skills; to prevent learning difficulties and maladjustment, facilitate inclusion, and thus prepare children for adulthood.

Furthermore, with increasing recognition of the impact of children's speech, language and communication skills upon educational achievement (Bercow, 2008), and evidence to suggest that children with SEBD experience communication problems (Beitchman et al, 2001; Stringer & Lozano, 2007), the researcher would suggest that language skills are an important factor to consider when investigating NGs and attainment. Interestingly the literature review suggests that no study has specifically considered language as a NG outcome, even though it is one of the core NG principles (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006).

1.6 The Local Context.

The previous sections provided an overview of the national context and some of the seminal research with regards to support and educational provision for children with SEBD.

The current study took place within a small LA in the U.K. where the researcher worked as a trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). In 2010, the EPS established a behaviour service to support primary schools with children at risk of exclusion. An evaluation of the service one year on (ANON, 2011) identified several key development areas, one being the development of NGs to support schools' limitations in addressing SEBD. In light of an increasing evidence base (as discussed above), three NGs were established across the county in schools within areas of social and economic deprivation. The aim was to improve provision, reduce exclusions and increase attainment.

To ensure that support was appropriate and carefully evaluated the LA sought to provide evidence-based data on the impact of NGs. Therefore a small team of EPs within the LA were involved in evaluating the provisions. Whilst other team members evaluated the impact of NGs upon exclusion rates and children's social, emotional and behavioural development; the researcher's directive was to consider the impact of NGs upon academic outcomes. As noted previously, increasing the attainment of children with SEBD was a key focus for the LA. This focus arose partly from the behaviour service evaluation (ANON, 2011), which identified that referred children had specific speech and language

needs, including poor social communication, and weaker literacy skills. Relationships between emotional/behavioural disorders and language and literacy difficulties are widely documented (Gilmour, Hill, Place & Skuse, 2004; Levy, 2001; Mackie & Law, 2010; Maughan, 1994), suggesting the value of investigating these skills specifically in relation to educational progress. Consequently, the EPS sought to evaluate the academic benefits of NGs, exploring in particular any impact upon language and literacy skills.

However, the researcher also held a personal interest and extended the proposal to consider pupils' views of NGs, particularly in relation to their learning (language and literacy), acknowledging that such information may help to inform the identified outcomes. Furthermore, the researcher recognised the importance of including a qualitative aspect within the project, in light of the difficulties inherent in investigating NGs using quantitative methods. These difficulties arise given the need to consider outcomes across different provisions due to the small size of the groups. This creates confounding variables such as: the nature of the children accessing the provisions, the differences in their presenting needs and difficulties, their varied age range, and the different contexts they experience relative to their school and home environments; and can create problems for the reliability and validity of the results. The researcher recognised the difficulty of investigating the impact of NGs robustly. Therefore, she felt that the inclusion of a qualitative aspect would provide a valuable contribution, and indeed carry the greater weighting within the research, as it would both support the results obtained from the quantitative methods and assist understanding as to why these results may have been obtained.

1.7 Research Aims

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of newly established NGs upon young children, including their progress in language and literacy skills. Therefore the research sought to:

- Investigate children's educational attainment before and after NG access to determine whether the provision improved children's language and literacy skills.

- Consider children's experiences of NGs, exploring their views of the provision and any support offered by NGs for developing language and literacy skills.

The research aim and a review of the literature led to the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Do measures of children's language skills show improvement following access to the nurture group?

RQ2: Do measures of children's literacy skills show improvement following access to the nurture group?

RQ3: What are the children's views about attending the nurture group?

RQ4: What are the children's views about whether the nurture group helped their language and literacy?

1.8 The Researcher's Position

This research was undertaken by a TEP who had previously worked as a family outreach worker, supporting families with pre-school children, and so had an understanding of the importance of early attachment. As a TEP, she seeks to address the problems faced by children in education and has learnt the importance of accessing the child's voice and considering the child in context when seeking solutions to a problem situation. These values underpinned her approach to the research.

As a TEP, the researcher has come to believe that realities exist, but that there is an explanation for these and that greater understanding should be sought. Therefore, this study adopted a Critical Realist position, acknowledging that outcomes are dependent upon the mechanisms and context involved (Robson, 2002). It was hoped that seeking an explanation for the results obtained would allow for this understanding to be used in optimising the innovation's effects. The approach also sat well with the researcher's belief regarding the importance of attachment theory and the impact of early experiences upon later

outcomes. In line with the Critical Realist approach a mixed-methods design was employed, allowing for objective measurement of NG outcomes, whilst acknowledging the intervening processes involved. Such an approach was felt to be important in order to comprehensively address the research aim (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

1.9 Relevance to Professional Practice.

Given the current emphasis within educational psychology upon evidence based practice (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2006; Farrell et al, 2006) it is essential that EPs are aware of approaches which make a positive difference for children. Within this remit, evaluative research plays an important role in establishing and understanding impact (Wolpert et al, 2006).

Therefore, there is the need for a strong evidence base which recognises NGs as an intervention to support schools in managing children with SEBD. Given the educational nature of NGs it is important to understand their impact upon academic outcomes and the factors which promote successful learning. This would support EPs to make appropriate recommendations to optimise the effectiveness of NGs, whilst highlighting their academic profile. Furthermore, there is increasing recognition of the link between SEBD and language and literacy difficulties (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2012; Stringer & Lozano, 2007; Farrell, Critchley & Mills, 1999), as well as the impact that such skills can have upon attainment (Bercow, 2008; Dockrell & Lindsay, 1998). Therefore, these skills are important to address as findings may help to inform future intervention, both within NGs and in relation to more widespread practice.

1.10 Summary of Chapter One.

This chapter has provided an overview of the research. The following chapter will present a critical review of the research literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter provided an overview of the current research. This chapter aims to review the research literature, placing the research in context and providing a foundation for further research. Initially, the review process is outlined, prior to a critical analysis of some of the available literature pertaining to NGs. Areas of focus include academic outcomes, in particular language and literacy development, and research into NGs which has addressed the child's views. The theoretical underpinnings of the research are also discussed in light of the NG philosophy.

2.2 The Review Process

This review sought to critically analyse the available literature to consider the rationale of arguments, their relevance, and the quality of available data (Fink, 1998; Gough, 2007; Peelo, 1994). A literature review has been described as:

'A systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of recorded work' (Fink, 1998, p.3).

To begin the process electronic databases were employed to search for relevant articles. Through EBSCO Host the following databases were searched: PsychInfo, PsychARTICLES, Education Research Complete, Teacher Reference Centre, and Academic Search Complete. Key search terms included: nurture, nurture groups, SEBD, pupil voice and children's views; which were searched alongside language, literacy, learning, attachment, education and attainment. Parameters ensured that articles were peer-reviewed, available as a full text, contained references and were in the English language. Publication dates varied with research on NGs dating back to 1970 when the intervention was introduced, whilst research around SEBD, and that considering the child's voice, was primarily focused on the last 15 years to reflect current understanding and practice. Tables to show the results of the systematic literature review are provided in appendix 1.

The researcher selected items initially from the articles produced through the search terms 'nurture groups, education' and 'nurture groups, language', before expanding this to the results produced through 'nurture groups' to catch items which the previous terms may have missed. Abstracts were scanned and where reference was made to NGs and learning the article was analysed in greater depth to obtain important information including; theory, definitions, concepts, arguments and data (Hart, 2001). At this stage the researcher produced a table, for her own individual use, to support her in critically reviewing the available research and to remind her of the key points uncovered. The table addressed various areas including: the research aim, sample, methodology, results and theoretical background. Following this initial step, the researcher expanded her search, whilst also going on to consider research relative to: NGs more generally, SEBD, and access to the child's voice. In order to expand her search, the researcher considered the reference lists of papers uncovered during the database search, identifying articles which may be of further support and interest and subsequently gaining access to these through additional searches. She also completed a hand search of journals and books for the same purpose, seeking and reading articles which may be of relevance. A Google search was also performed to identify further research and informative articles relative to nurture groups, SEBD and access to the child's voice; thus enabling the discovery of sources not available from EBSCO. Finally, the researcher also drew upon references from university lectures in order to uncover additional articles and gained access to online theses to consider further research within the relevant domains. Reading and critiquing these additional sources of information gathered through supplementary searches provided the researcher with a more comprehensive evidence base to draw upon, thereby further informing her understanding of the area.

The following sections now present an overview of the relevant literature. Initially, the impact of NGs upon children's social, emotional and behavioural development is reviewed.

2.3 Nurture Groups and their Impact on Behaviour

There is now evidence from both small-scale (Bishop & Swain, 2000; Doyle, 2005) and large-scale studies (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997) to suggest that children can experience social, emotional and behavioural gains following NG access. These findings are also supported more recently by an Ofsted (2011) survey.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) considered 34 NGs across 11 LA's. The NGs catered for both primary and secondary pupils and adhered to different models. Control and comparison groups were implemented. The total sample consisted of 546 pupils, of these 359 were accessing NGs, 226 of which were in provisions established for more than 2 years. The comparison groups included pupils, with and without SEBD, who were attending schools with and without NGs. Whilst a mixed methods approach was employed, only quantitative results were reported, which indicated significant behavioural improvements for NG students using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997; 2001) and the Boxall Profile (BP) (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). Cooper and Whitebread also acknowledged the impact of NGs upon learning, with further analysis of the BP indicating that whilst the biggest social, emotional and behavioural gains are made in the first two terms, the children's ability to engage with learning tasks continued to improve into terms three and four. This supports the belief of Bennathan and Boxall (2000) that NGs support children's learning by laying the appropriate social and emotional foundations. The sample size and use of multiple measures are strengths of this study. However, no distinction is made regarding the impact of different NG models upon outcomes, despite the inclusion of both primary and secondary provisions and classic and variant groups.

Other studies have used qualitative methods. Sanders (2007) demonstrated using the BP that primary school children attending NGs made significant social and emotional gains. These results were then supported by interviews with staff and parents which indicated that children were better able to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour. Whilst BPs were used on a small sample within one school, causing problems with generalisation, the findings are

consistent with other outcomes (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Garner and Thomas (2011) extended these findings to secondary NGs. Using interviews and focus groups they considered the experiences of children, parents, and NG staff. Improved self-esteem and enhanced social and emotional skills were recognised as outcomes; whilst findings indicated the importance of factors such as the adult-child relationship in facilitating development, and the need for on-going support networks to maintain progress. Their findings suggest that NGs can support secondary age children, extending the evidence base, whilst also indicating potentially influential processes. The value of the qualitative approach is its ability to add depth to the data by facilitating understanding of the processes involved.

Investigating long-term effects, O'Connor and Colwell (2002) assessed 68 children using the BP on entry, exit (after a mean attendance of 3 terms), and following two years re-integration. Findings on exit demonstrated significant improvements for all children. However, the long-term maintenance was less clear, as whilst half of the skills assessed by the BP demonstrated significant improvement, the remaining half did not, although improvement was still evident. The authors suggested that a degree of nurturing may be needed within mainstream classrooms to maintain change. Unfortunately, the study was retrospective with high attrition rates leading to a small sample size (n=12) following re-integration. In addition, the BP was the sole measure of progress which raises concern given its potentially subjective nature. Therefore, further research is necessary to draw firm conclusions.

The research reviewed thus far suggests that NGs can impact positively upon children's social, emotional and behavioural development. Whilst there are limitations within the evidence base, quantitative measures have helped to establish the effects of NGs (outcomes), and qualitative measures have allowed an understanding of the intervening processes which may be responsible for the identified outcomes. An understanding of these processes can be particularly illuminative given that not all children make the same progress (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Gerrard, 2006). Therefore, it is important to identify factors which may make a difference.

However, it is also important to consider the impact of NGs upon children's attainment, as their intensive nature requires children's full or part-time absence from the mainstream classroom. Within this domain the researcher would argue that language development is an important aspect to consider given that children's speech, language and communication skills impact on educational achievement (Bercow, 2008), and that there is increasing evidence that this is an area of difficulty for children with SEBD, as outlined within Chapter One. Therefore research surrounding the impact of NGs upon language development is now considered.

2.4 Nurture Groups and Language Development

There is evidence to suggest that early relationships are important in the development of language (Geddes, 2006b; Golding, 2008) and that language is a key factor in children's learning and development. Evidence from attachment theory supports the role of social interaction in language development (Geddes, 2006), with recognition that insecure attachments can be associated with language deficits/impairments (Greig et al, 2008). Evidence from neuroscience supports the influence of language on learning with results demonstrating that the new born child's ability to express emotion and social behaviour is likely to regulate early brain development (Schoore, 2001). With increasing evidence of the links between children's language and communication skills and their success in school (Allen & Duncan Smith, 2008; Tickell, 2011), there has been a growing number of government initiatives, and policies, aimed at raising children's attainment by addressing language development. Following the results of the Bercow Review in 2008, developments have included the 'Better Communication Action Plan' (DCSF, 2008), and the 'Speech Language and Communication Framework' (The Communication Trust, 2008), whilst the Green Paper (2011) emphasises language and communication in a child's early years.

Research has consistently demonstrated a high degree of speech and language difficulties amongst children with SEBD, with the prevalence ranging from 55%-100% (Giddan, Milling and Campbell, 1996; Sivyler, 1999) in comparison to 5% in the general population (Wintgens, 2001). In addition, many communication difficulties go undetected in this population (Stringer & Lozano, 2007) which can

contribute to social and academic failure (Clegg, Hollis, Mawhood & Rutter, 2005; Snowling, Adams, Bishop & Stothard, 2001). Language difficulties can impact on a child's relationships, confidence, behaviour, and ultimately their well-being (Bryan & Mackenzie, 2008). Furthermore, such difficulties can impact significantly on educational achievement, as language links with learning processes in general and therefore language impairments will have implications for classroom learning (Tommerdahl, 2009). In particular there is increasing recognition of the link between language difficulties and literacy outcomes (Nation, Clarke, Marshall & Durrant, 2004). The Berrow review (2008) found that at the end of primary school, although nearly 80% of children achieve the expected level in English, only 25% of children with long term communication difficulties achieve that. Further evidence indicates that 50-90% of children with persistent difficulties go on to experience reading difficulties. This co-morbidity of language and literacy difficulties has been increasingly reported amongst pupils with SEBD (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2012; Tomblin, Zhang, Buckwalter & Catts, 2000).

A key aspect of the NG curriculum is to address issues related to language, communication, and literacy by developing children's reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Communication problems are often a major reason for NG placement (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007), and such difficulties are known to manifest in behavioural problems and under-achievement in school (The Communication Trust, 2011). Whilst there is some literature to evidence improved literacy ability, no previous study appears to have assessed the impact of NGs on children's language skills. This is surprising given that NGs specifically utilise both informal opportunities (circle time, snack time, play) and formal lessons to encourage the development of language and communication skills (NGN, 2011).

However, there is evidence to suggest that positive outcomes have been found, albeit not intentionally. For example, Ofsted (2011) identified that a continual emphasis on language within a NG visited had been effective in encouraging pupils' ability to express themselves and in improving their academic and social understanding. Unfortunately, it is unclear how this improvement was determined and whether such effects were measured or observed, although,

the same survey did report from interviews with 95 parents that commonly observed NG outcomes included children's developing language and communication skills. Similarly, Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) recognised that NG staff often acknowledged improvements in children's social skills. Anecdotal evidence indicated that improvements included perceived progress in relation to language skills, which is important in helping to support an under-researched domain and suggesting that NGs can support children's language development.

'I had one little boy who was very withdrawn, wouldn't talk at all, speech problems....., he's chatty in the classroom, he'll talk to the children/teachers. (Nursery Teacher reported in Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007, p.50)

'Her speech and language have really improved...she will often try to use adventurous vocabulary in her conversation' (Nurture Group Teacher reported in Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007, p.50).

The literature review indicates that there is very little research on the impact of NGs upon children's language development. Interestingly, there appears to be a lack of standardised measures to consider children's progress in their speech, language and communication skills, whilst the evidence available from qualitative methods remains limited. Given the importance attached to the role of language in NGs and the impact of language difficulties upon academic achievement, this is an important issue to consider.

In light of the recognised challenges which children with SEBD face in their learning, the identified relationship between language and learning, and in particular the co-morbidity of language and literacy difficulties amongst children with SEBD, the following section will now consider the impact of NGs upon children's academic outcomes, with particular reference to literacy skills.

2.5 Nurture Groups & Academic Outcomes

NGs explicitly acknowledge the importance of educational attainment alongside social and psychological development (Cooper & Lovey, 1999; NGN, 2011). Ofsted (2011) recently identified that the most successful NGs viewed success

in basic skills (literacy and numeracy) as key in improving self-esteem, and placed an emphasis on developing these. This supports the argument of Farrell, Critchley & Mills (1999) that intervention for children with SEBD should provide education in the basic skills, alongside therapeutic approaches. However, Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) found that teachers struggled to demonstrate academic progress and lacked an awareness of pupils' work within the NG. A finding supported by Head (2005), who acknowledged that the learning needs of children with SEBD were not met and were not recognised as a first priority. Therefore, there is a need to highlight NGs academic profile to improve outcomes for children.

As identified within chapter one research regarding academic progress has become more prominent in recent years, with findings demonstrating that NGs can support attainment and assist progress. Some of the available research will now be reviewed in greater detail.

2.5.1 Quantitative Methodologies

In 2009, Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney conducted a large-scale study into the effects of NGs on children's development and attainment. 221 pupils were included, 117 who attended NGs and 104 attending schools without NGs, who were matched according to BP results. The research provided further evidence of the positive impact upon social, emotional and behavioural domains. Academic progress was also investigated using the Baseline Assessment for Early Literacy (MacKay, 1999; 2006). Children ranged in age from five to seven years old, but as no significant effects were found in relation to the children's year group, analyses were carried out on the entire sample. The NG children showed significant attainment gains over six months ($p < 0.001$) with an increase in mean score from time 1/pre-test (54.90) to time 2/post-test (81.60), whilst further analyses indicated that academic gains could be linked to improvements in domains of the BP. Although the control group scores also showed an increase (time 1 = 61.66, time 2 = 78.05) the difference was not significant, though unfortunately the exact level was not given. Results suggested that NGs supported academic development, indicating that improved social, emotional and behavioural development allowed children to access their learning. These findings support those of Cooper and Whitebread (2007) who identified that

children's ability to engage with their learning continues to improve following social, emotional and behavioural gains. Reynolds et al (2009) were the first to employ quantitative measures to demonstrate NGs impact upon academic attainment. Their research helped to clarify academic outcomes by providing a measure of progress, although, there was a high attrition rate and a lack of qualitative measures to allow data triangulation.

In a later study, Seth-Smith et al (2010) provided further quantitative evidence of academic progress. Over a six month period 44 children from 10 NG schools were compared with children from 5 control schools. Results indicated improved social, emotional and behavioural functioning for NG children. In addition, though an increase in attainment scores, as measured by National Curriculum Levels (NCLs), was significant for both groups ($p=0.02$), improvements were more consistent for the NG children. Because teachers used both the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum levels a continuous numerical scale was employed to demonstrate progress. Whilst the mean score for the control group increased from 6.5 at time 1 (pre-intervention) to 7.2 at time 2 (post-intervention), the mean score for the NG children was greater increasing from 3.7 to 5.0. However, whilst academic progress was identified, and in this instance considered relative to both literacy and numeracy, progress was teacher rated and therefore may be subject to bias. Thus, further evidence specific to academic outcomes, in the form of either quantitative or qualitative measures, would have added strength to the findings by enabling the triangulation of data.

2.5.2 Qualitative Methodologies

The use of qualitative methods has helped to corroborate findings from quantitative studies. For example, Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) used semi-structured interviews which questioned perceived educational progress. The teachers indicated that 60% of children had made progress, with a further 20% displaying substantial progress. Interestingly, according to the parents' perceptions, educational progress was the biggest gain. Yet, whilst progress was perceived, this was not true for all participants, and comparative data in the form of NC levels was unavailable at publication. However, Binnie and Allen (2008) report similar findings, supporting the results' validity and extending the

findings to part-time provisions. They found that 67% of teachers compared to 91% of parents, reported perceived academic progress.

Qualitative methodologies have also been useful in helping to identify intervening processes which may be responsible for the outcomes. For example, Sanders (2007) requested that staff rate children's academic gains using a pupil assessment form. Findings indicated that two-thirds of staff felt the children had progressed, whilst factors such as increased motivation, the ability to work independently, and greater capacity to take risks with learning were identified as influential variables. This data was supported by observations which suggested the children had developed improved concentration and an interest in engaging with learning. Whilst this triangulation of data helps to provide further evidence of developing skills, it is unclear what was measured in the pupil assessment and therefore what academic skills pupils might have developed. March and Healy (2007) focused their research upon parents' perceptions of NGs demonstrating that parents reported progress in two main areas: social skills and academic skills. In relation to academic progress they commented on improvements in reading and sounds, writing and spelling, numeracy, and speaking. Analysis also indicated that parents felt their children had better skills in areas underpinning academic learning such as being organised, trying hard, showing independence, listening and paying attention. These findings are consistent with those detailed previously and point to improvements in pupils' confidence and skills for learning.

2.5.3 Research using Mixed-Methods

The mixed-methods approach allows both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection which can enable consideration of both outcomes and processes. Such an approach can also facilitate triangulation of evidence from different sources, thus improving the robustness of the findings obtained.

There is a paucity of research using mixed-methods approaches which considers NGs and academic outcomes. Furthermore, some studies claim to have used this approach but only report findings from one methodology (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001). When specifically considering children's literacy outcomes the researcher was only able to find one mixed-methods study which

reported the findings of both methodologies. Scott and Lee (2009) used anecdotal evidence from case study reports, alongside the BP and measures of literacy, numeracy and motor skills. They considered academic outcomes in four part-time NGs with 25 children ranging in age from 4-10 years old. A control group was matched for age, gender, and behaviour and learning concerns for each individual child. The aggregated gains of each group were compared, indicating that the NG children displayed greater gains in all areas. Although literacy gains were greater for NG children, the difference was not significant. However, results were important in demonstrating that overall NG children were able to match or exceed the academic gains of their peers, despite a reduced access to the formal curriculum. The anecdotal evidence helped to triangulate the findings, indicating improvements in areas such as sharing concerns with staff, reduced aggression, greater independent working and improved confidence. A relative strength of the research is that the results suggest academic gains are evident in part-time provisions, although a lack of statistical significance suggests the area warrants further investigation. Interestingly, further analysis suggested that the children's age may influence outcomes. Whilst younger children (key stage 1) displayed greater progress socially and emotionally, older children (key stage 2) appeared to display greater progress academically. The influence of age upon academic, social and emotional outcomes is therefore a factor requiring further research. To add robustness to the findings greater transparency in data analyses and further triangulation between quantitative and qualitative data would have been beneficial. However, by adopting a mixed-methods approach the researchers were able to identify that a reduced access to the formal curriculum is not detrimental, whilst identifying some contextual factors which may have influenced outcomes.

2.5.4 A Summary of the Research Surrounding NGs and Academic Outcomes

The literature review provides evidence to suggest that NGs can support academic progress. Research using quantitative methods has provided specific measurable outcomes relative to children's literacy and numeracy ability, whilst qualitative data has highlighted progress, and improved our understanding of this by identifying change in areas such as: improved concentration, self-confidence, and willingness to engage. These findings have been applied to

both full- and part-time NGs, whilst the use of control groups suggests that NGs facilitate progress beyond that which would be observed over time. Progress has also been demonstrated with children across the primary cohort, although there is some evidence to suggest that a child's age may influence outcomes (Scott & Lee, 2009). Conversely, Reynolds, Mackay and Kearney (2009) found that age did not impact upon results. Therefore, age as a factor in relation to academic outcomes requires further investigation.

Whilst findings are predominantly positive, limitations do remain within the evidence base. For example, there is a paucity of outcome data which creates problems with generalisation, triangulation with other measures is infrequent, and the reported analysis of qualitative data is often limited, creating difficulty in determining the plausibility of findings. In addition, there is a lack of mixed-methods research with few studies utilising qualitative data to support outcome findings, an approach which would also allow for further insight with regards to influential processes which might contribute towards success.

This latter factor was of particular interest to the researcher as she felt that to raise NGs academic profile further understanding of the intervening processes would be necessary. In seeking this understanding the researcher felt that accessing the views of the children in the NGs would be beneficial, given that they are the clients. The following section will consider research which has assessed children's perceptions, to consider how this could be developed.

2.6 Children's Views of Nurture Groups

Previous discussions have highlighted the importance of qualitative data in research. A review of the literature suggests that several studies have sought to access the perspectives of those who have experienced NGs. Interestingly, children's perspectives appear to have been sought least frequently. In some instances, the child's voice has been given less prominence during analysis, and thus it is hard to differentiate their views from the perspectives of other stakeholders (Bishop & Swain, 2000; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

There may be several reasons for this. For example, it can be difficult to access children's views reliably as experienced by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001).

They found that children did not want to be disloyal and provided guarded answers when asked to compare their mainstream classroom and the NG. However, the children were able to discuss aspects of the group which they valued, including interpersonal relationships, opportunities for free play, the quieter environment, and predictability of the NG routine. Such insights help to identify factors which are important to the children and are therefore likely to assist progress. Garner and Thomas (2011) also recognised the potential sensitivity of interviewing children, but again managed to uncover valuable perspectives. They identified that children appreciated close relationships with NG staff, the provision of security, and improved self-confidence as factors associated with NGs. Interestingly, these factors can also be linked to the attachment theory underpinning NGs. Importantly, whilst these studies recognise potential difficulties in accessing children's views, they suggest that it is feasible and that valuable insights can be obtained.

In relation to academic outcomes, seeking children's perspectives has provided some insight into possible influences. Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) recognised that children are often very positive about their NG experiences, and identified that the availability and quality of staff support was often acknowledged as a key factor by children, which also appeared to encourage them with their learning. Similarly, aspects of the environment, including its security and quietness, could be identified as influential factors. Following quotes demonstrate this:

'They are nice teachers here 'cause when I can't do things, they help me, they realise I can't do as speedy as others but I don't feel stupid.'
(Key Stage 2 student) (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007, p.66).

'In the other [mainstream] classroom, students are naughty...I can't concentrate and I can't understand anything. In the nurture suite I can concentrate, it is very quiet.' (Key Stage 3 student) (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007, p.68).

However, these findings are presented following a review of available research. Unfortunately, the authors do not identify how the information was obtained,

how it was analysed, or what NG model children were accessing; all important factors when considering the value and implications of research. Interestingly, only one other researcher explicitly identifies children's perceptions around learning. Sanders (2007) employed semi-structured interviews with seven children in key stage 1 from three NG schools. Children were selected for having the most marked needs and were asked questions regarding their perception of school, their perceptions of themselves as a learner, and their friendships. At the end of the group, the children reported that they liked school more, had better friendships and ratings suggested more positive concepts of themselves as learners. Whilst this research makes a contribution to our understanding, it is unclear how this was approached, the type of questions asked, and how they were delivered. Furthermore, the information gleaned is limited and does not go beyond stating that concepts improve.

What is apparent from this review is that research which has explicitly asked NG children to recognise factors which supported their learning is absent. The researcher acknowledges that difficulties are apparent in this process, for example accessing children's views reliably, the possibility for response bias, and the child's willingness to engage. However, if NGs are a provision aiming to facilitate children's access to learning, the researcher would argue that considering children's perceptions as to whether and how the provision supported their learning, could provide valuable insight into the processes within NGs which may influence academic success.

The right for children to express an opinion, and have that opinion acknowledged for matters directly affecting them, was first acknowledged in 1989 by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. More recently legislation in the U.K. (DfES, 2001, 2002A, 2002B, 2003, 2005a) has stressed the importance of ascertaining the child's views, thereby enabling them to participate in decisions concerning their education (Todd, 2003b). May (2005) acknowledges that the need to continue accessing children's perceptions is essential, to develop such approaches. This research sought to obtain children's views regarding their experiences surrounding NGs and learning. An objective deemed appropriate given that EPs are well positioned to elicit children's views and include them in decisions regarding their education (DfEE,

2000), and that previous research has found such an approach to be beneficial in improving the effectiveness of interventions (Davie, 1993; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004).

This section has considered some of the existing research surrounding NGs, with a focus upon learning, language and literacy outcomes, given the difficulties these skills can pose for children with SEBD. The following section now considers the current study's theoretical underpinnings so that outcomes may be considered in light of this context. More specifically attachment theory is discussed, as this underpins the NG approach.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Central to the philosophy of NGs is attachment theory, an area of psychology which explains the importance of children forming secure and happy relationships with others (NGN, 2013b). Attachment theory originated with the seminal work of John Bowlby (1951) who recognised the importance of the mother-child relationship for emotional, social and cognitive development. Over the years this understanding has developed and there is now a range of literature which recognises the impact of attachment relationships upon children's behaviour and learning and the subsequent implications for the school environment (Bomber, 2007; Geddes, 2006, Gerhardt, 2004).

2.7.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory provides an explanation of how the parent-child relationship evolves and influences subsequent development. Bowlby (1969, 1988) found that babies are biologically predisposed to seek closeness to care givers for food, protection and warmth using their relationship as a 'secure base'. Infants become attached to individuals who are responsive and sensitive in their social interactions with them and it is suggested that access to nurturing relationships in the early stages of child development are necessary for later mental health (Bowlby, 1951, 1965, 1969, 1980).

The attachment relationship allows the child to develop an internal working model (IWM); internal representations which relate to the reliability and availability of others, and one's own worthiness, providing a sense of self in

relation to others (Bowlby, 1980). IWM's continue to develop with time and experience and in line with environmental and developmental changes (Mercer, 2006). Infants who experience inconsistent care typically exhibit insecure attachments. They retain an insecure model viewing the world as unpredictable and responding either by shrinking from it or fighting against it (Bowlby, 1973). 'Securely attached' children believe that they are loveable and have trust in others thus having the confidence to tolerate separation from their parent. This enables them to take risks, exploring the world with curiosity, and consequently enables social and emotional development and the capacity to learn new things (Bomber, 2007). A securely attached child is able to explore and experience their social, emotional and physical world. Through play, their motor and cognitive development is supported, through shared emotional experiences their emotional development is stimulated, and through interactions with others their use of language and social skills develop. In contrast, the child with an insecure attachment is fearful of the unpredictable world, reducing the likelihood of exploration, which impacts upon their development and emotional well-being (Pearce, 2009). It is hypothesised that they feel unable to take risks and struggle to cope with failure (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

Recent neuroscience research further supports our understanding of the importance of attachment for development and learning. Schore (2005) has demonstrated that attachment experiences directly affect the orbito-frontal cortex of the brain. If children receive appropriate care-giving they establish connections between neurons and forge neural pathways. However, children experiencing insensitive care have abnormally high levels of stress hormones, and consequently a higher stress response (McCain, Mustard & Shanker, 2007; Schore, 1997). This hinders the developing pre-frontal cortex responsible for empathy, logic and reasoning, creating large areas of inactivity (Bomber, 2007; Wilkinson, 2006). Cefai and Cooper (2009) further support the importance of secure attachments for learning, with evidence that anxiety and fear causes the blood to flow away from the areas of the brain required for cognitive reasoning, whilst relaxed states promote neurochemical changes conducive to learning.

2.7.2 Nurture Groups and Attachment Theory

The principal emphasis of NGs is the development of secure attachments in an educational setting to facilitate learning (Cooke, Yeomans & Parkes, 2008). The development of a secure attachment is achieved through the key principles of NGs including: the nurture class offers a secure base, language is a vital means of communication and nurture is important for self-esteem; and is facilitated through the importance assigned to the adult-child relationship. Using language as communication the children learn to respond appropriately to others and to develop a sense of self-regulation, whilst an emphasis upon self-esteem allows them to develop a secure IWM. The implication is that relationships with significant others can moderate negative attachment experiences (Grossman & Grossman, 1991) and Boxall (2002) highlights the importance of the teacher-child relationship for providing a secure base and allowing the child to feel safe in learning new things.

Children's learning is further supported through the key principle that learning is understood developmentally (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006), with recognition that insecure children struggle to face challenges and cope with failure. Consequently, tasks are set at an appropriate level to provide positive experiences which increase self-esteem and academic success and promote feelings of security (Cooper & Lovey, 1999). As Lucas (1999) identifies, differentiating work is common practice for children with SEN and needs to be the same for children with SEBD. NGs seek to scaffold children's learning and stretch the learner appropriately by recognising the child's developmental level and their capability. This links with Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory and the concept of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' where the child's learning is guided through interaction with the competent peer. The importance assigned to mediated and social learning (Vygotsky, 1978) is also apparent through the inclusion of play activities and in the emphasis upon language.

Mackay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) argue that by addressing key attachment issues and providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum, NGs can support academic development alongside behavioural functioning. An

argument supported by data from a large scale study (Reynolds et al 2009). This relationship has been established over the years, for example, Moss and St-Laurent (2001) found that the quality of the attachment relationship led to more competent exploratory behaviour and greater cognitive engagement. Similarly, Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1988, 1992, 1995, 1997) highlight the importance of attachment relationships for cognitive development and educational achievement, demonstrating that social interaction is important in the early learning of literacy. The implication is that attachment theory provides a theoretical framework to consider research within NGs and the linked educational context, which in turn provides a means of supporting the social, emotional and academic needs of children with SEBD.

2.8 The Current Study

The literature review provides evidence for a growing evidence base regarding NGs and children's outcomes. However, whilst NGs contain an explicit curriculum component and are believed to facilitate learning by addressing social and emotional barriers, the evidence base surrounding academic outcomes appears less extensive. The researcher would argue that academic outcomes should be a key consideration given the recognised link between SEBD and learning difficulties, particularly in relation to the key skills of language and literacy. Perhaps most important is the recognition that no previous studies have explicitly investigated the impact of NGs upon children's language skills, whilst access to children's views and experiences of NGs is limited, suggesting that these areas would benefit from further investigation.

This research aimed to highlight the academic profile of NGs by contributing to the evidence base surrounding academic outcomes and drawing attention to the importance of understanding how NGs support children's learning. It employed a mixed methods approach to consider not only academic outcomes but also potentially influential processes, recognising a current lack of studies which utilised this approach and the importance of placing the data within a context to support understanding. Both language and literacy skills were considered as academic outcomes as these are key factors which can impact on educational achievement. This also ensured that the research made a distinctive contribution through the provision of a specific measurable outcome

of language development. Quantitative methods were employed to measure outcomes, using several tools to triangulate the data and therefore add strength to the evidence base. Qualitative methods were employed to consider possible factors facilitating or hindering progress. Importantly children's views were sought, given that they were the clients and arguably the best placed to support understanding of the intervention.

2.9 Summary of Chapter Two

Having reviewed available literature surrounding NGs, academic outcomes and pupil's perceptions, the next chapter outlines the methodology of this particular research thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter critically reviewed some of the literature relevant to this research area. This chapter now details how this research was conducted in light of the findings. Attention is first drawn to the research aims and purpose, followed by consideration of the adopted epistemological position and methodology. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are then outlined with discussion of the tools used and the procedures followed. Finally, ethical considerations are presented.

3.2 Research Aims, Background and Purpose

Evaluative research typically addresses an innovation, for example an intervention, and aims to assess impact or effectiveness (Robson, 2002). The aim of this research was to evaluate the impact of newly established, part-time NGs (variant NGs), upon young children, including their progress in language and literacy. As identified within chapter one, the evaluation was conducted in response to the establishment of new NGs within the LA. Given that increasing attainment for children with SEBD was a key objective for the LA, the researcher's focus was upon reviewing academic outcomes together with the children's responses to the provision. The initial aim was further upheld by the literature review which revealed the need for additional research demonstrating the effects of NGs upon attainment. Furthermore, in recognition that language and literacy skills present particular difficulties for children with SEBD (Anon, 2011; Dockrell & Lindsay, 2012) the focus was upon academic outcomes relative to these domains. Interestingly, the literature review revealed that no previous study had specifically considered the impact of NGs upon language development, suggesting that this is an area which warrants investigation. The latter aim was also supported by the literature review, which revealed the need for further research, both generally and in relation to NGs, which attempts to access the child's voice. The researcher felt that ascertaining the children's views of NGs, particularly in relation to learning, would support understanding of the processes facilitating any development, allowing opportunities to optimise

effectiveness. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the inclusion of a qualitative aspect would assist research within a difficult area (see section 1.6).

Having considered the research's purpose, the following sections will now discuss the researcher's epistemological position and the methodology adopted.

3.3 Epistemological Position

A research design involves both philosophical assumptions and distinct methods/procedures. Therefore, the researcher must consider the worldview that they bring to the research (Creswell, 2003). A worldview is the framework through which individuals experience and make sense of the world (DeWitt, 2009), and these direct thinking and action (Mertens, 2005). Within research different worldviews/paradigms produce different types of knowledge and therefore different outcomes (Robson, 2002).

Whilst ontology refers to the nature of reality, and what there is to know (Mertens, 2005), epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge, addressing what we can know (data) and how (methodology and methods) within the ontology (Willig, 2008). Researchers need to identify the purpose of the knowledge they hope to produce, as the chosen epistemological position governs the methods and procedures that allow this approach to evolve into practice (Creswell, 2003; Willig, 2008). Four worldviews predominantly guide psychological research; these include Positivism, Social Constructionism, Pragmatism and Realism.

A Positivist epistemology seeks to produce unbiased knowledge believing that an objective 'real' world exists independent of human perception (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Positivists employ methods which provide quantitative data aiming to uncover scientific laws and looking for constant relationships between variables (Robson, 2002). However, they have been criticised for disregarding the influence of contextual factors upon knowledge formation (Willig, 2008). There is also recognition that the researcher's values can influence what is observed (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994) and therefore that reality may only be known probably (Robson, 2002).

In contrast, the Social Constructionist perspective advocates the importance of context, believing that multiple truths and realities are constructed to make sense of the world (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Their interest is with the experience (Willig, 2008) and they often adopt qualitative methods to seek understanding through individual's views and their interpretations of others' meanings (Creswell, 2003). Unlike Positivists the Social Constructionist approach accounts for the researcher's involvement and advocates reflexivity (Willig, 2008).

Pragmatism is a further epistemological position which argues that 'reality' is what works. For pragmatists the research purpose is of importance (Creswell, 2003). Methods are chosen to fit the research questions and this then informs the epistemology, it is possible to change perspectives and take up the most logical position in accordance with the findings (Robson, 2002).

This study adopted a Critical Realist approach. The Realism framework incorporates Positivism and Constructionism aspects, seeking an objective reality whilst acknowledging participant's perspectives and contextual factors (Robson, 2002). Realists state that a reality exists but seek an explanation for this, arguing that an outcome depends upon mechanisms acting within contexts (Robson, 2002). The knowledge obtained relates to the process which causes the effect (Matthews, 2003) and this can then be used to optimise the innovation's effects (Robson, 2002). Pawson and Tilley (2009) suggest that when evaluating programmes, it is important to consider what it is about the programme that works for whom and in what conditions. This research adopted a Critical Realist position as the researcher wished to investigate the impact of NGs upon children's language and literacy skills, whilst exploring the mechanisms surrounding the outcome (using the views and experiences from the children involved with the NGs). Within this paradigm a mixed-methods approach allows for objective measurement of the NGs effectiveness (outcome) whilst acknowledging some aspects of the contextual factors (process).

3.4 Mixed-Methods Research

Debate has been on-going regarding the contributions of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to psychological research (Wiggins, 2011). Whilst some researchers claim that the methodologies are opposed, others worry that favouring one approach would be restrictive, and that all evidence has value (Aluko, 2006; American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force, 2006). Consequently, some researchers have sought to integrate the two and the mixed-methods approach has arisen (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). Mixed-methods is a research design which:

‘Focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data providing a better understanding of a research problem than either approach alone’. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.5).

Mixed-methods approaches are being employed increasingly (Robson, 2002) with recognition that they can support better understanding of complex social phenomena (Rossman & Wilson, 1994). A common rationale is that the strengths of each methodology counteract the weaknesses of the other (Jick, 1979), thereby allowing the research to be generalisable whilst retaining flexibility and intimacy (Wiggins, 2011). It is theorised that more comprehensive evidence is available through the use of different tools and it is possible to answer questions that cannot be addressed with a single approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002). The mixed-methods approach can therefore be associated with the Critical Realist perspective where the assumption is that outcomes are dependent upon the mechanisms and context involved, and social constructs are also acknowledged to play a role in the development of science (Wiggins, 2011). However, researchers must acknowledge the philosophical conflict, clarifying the paradigms different aims through the knowledge they will produce (Fox, Martin & Greene, 2007).

3.4.1 Rational for Employing Mixed Methods

Given the information outlined, the difficulties inherent in investigating the impact of NGs, and the shortage of mixed-methods research considering NGs and academic outcomes, this study employed a mixed-methods approach,

guided by the Critical Realist perspective, to obtain comprehensive evidence and support the research aim. Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton (2006) suggest that mixed-methods can be useful in evaluation studies for determining impact. They advise that the approach allows comparison of results, enabling the researcher to clarify and elaborate the findings from one method with those of the other.

The mixed-methods design employed within this study was of an explanatory nature as the primary purpose was for the qualitative data to build upon and explain the initial quantitative results. In this way the NG outcomes could be understood based upon recognition of the processes influencing their success from the children's perspective. Therefore, the qualitative phase of the research followed on from, or connected to, the quantitative phase and was seen as sequential. It could be argued that as both quantitative and qualitative measures were collected pre/post-intervention that this may suggest a concurrent design. However, Morgan (1998) suggests that the most important consideration when determining timing is the order in which the data is used and therefore for the purpose of this research the timing was considered sequential.

The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data served to answer different RQs within this project and therefore it may be suggested that both methods have equal weighting. However, as the qualitative data sought to both expand upon the quantitative data and support and corroborate the quantitative findings, this aspect of the research was given greater weighting. This decision was supported through recognition of the small quantitative sample and the difficulties in investigating this research area (see section 1.6) thereby creating implications relative to the strength of the quantitative findings. Furthermore, importance was placed upon understanding the influential processes to optimise the intervention's effects. Therefore, decisions about weighting were influenced by both practical considerations (Creswell, 2003) and the study's goals (Morgan, 1998).

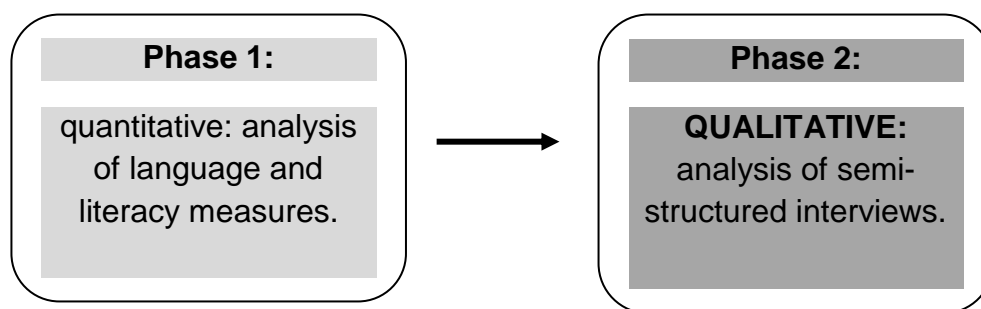


Figure 3.1: A Diagram to Show the Timing and Weighting of the Mixed-Methods Approach.

The following section will now consider both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research. An overview of the research procedure can be found in appendix two for further reference.

3.5 The Quantitative Aspect of the Research Project

3.5.1 Participant Selection

This research aimed to evaluate the impact of a NG experience for a group of young children. Therefore, mainstream primary schools within the LA who were due to establish new NGs (in accordance with Boxall principles) were approached by the researcher. This led to the identification of two schools due to begin with new cohorts within the research timeframe and the head teachers agreed that the schools would participate. Both were situated in the far southern region of the UK and located in urban areas experiencing social and economic deprivation. School A has approximately 413 students on roll, 159 of whom receive free school meals and 160 of whom have special educational needs (Census data, 2011). School B has approximately 354 children on roll, 91 of whom receive free school meals and 101 of whom have special educational needs (Census data, 2011). This range of needs includes learning, language, emotional and behavioural problems. Ofsted (2010a, 2010b) identified that in both schools, the proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities was much higher than the national average, whilst the number of pupils eligible for free school meals was significantly above average. The number of children from ethnic minority groups or those speaking English as an additional language was very small in each school.

Children were identified for the new NGs by school staff, although advice was occasionally sought from the wider EPS through discussion with school EPs or during initial strategy meetings. Children were raised as potential candidates if staff had initial concerns relative to social, emotional and behavioural needs, and a Boxall Profile (BP) was then completed to both assist in determining their need of the provision and to support understanding of the nature of the child's difficulties. By definition, children likely to benefit from NG access demonstrate relatively low scores on section one of the profile (developmental strands) and relatively high scores on the sub-clusters in section 2 (diagnostic profile) (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). Therefore, they appear to lack some of the key skills acquired during early development, whilst displaying behaviours likely to impact upon their ability to engage with their learning.

The BP provides a framework to consider a child's overall behavioural, social and cognitive engagement in school (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Initially, it encourages consideration of the developmental process which takes place during the early years of childhood, to determine whether a child has completed this first stage of learning. This section of the profile is labelled the 'Developmental Strands'. The profile then supports reflection upon behaviours that may influence the child's school involvement, as such behaviours are seen to be directly or indirectly the outcome of impaired learning during the early years. This later section of the profile is known as the 'Diagnostic Profile'. (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). The purpose of the BP therefore is not to label children but to closely examine their pattern of functioning. This supports an assessment process which aims to develop an understanding of the nature of the child's difficulties and encourage constructive thinking regarding appropriate forms of support (Evans, 2009). Furthermore, following intervention repeated use of the profile enables progress to be systematically assessed and reviewed (Bennathan & Boxall, 2010).

Within the context of this research the BP therefore had three key functions:

1. To support staff in deciding about a child's placement in the NG.
2. To encourage understanding of the child's difficulties, identifying areas to target for support.

3. To provide a means for reviewing the child's pattern of development and any progress made; thereby allowing consideration of a child's readiness to reintegrate into their mainstream class.

From the cohort identified by school staff and for whom BPs were completed, the senior management team (SMT) then selected 8 children for each NG. Decisions were based in part on the BP results, with consideration also of the child's need for support and an appropriate group composition, as determined by the SMT's perceptions. Below are a collection of graphs which summarise the selected children's scores on the BP. These therefore help to clarify the nature of the final participant group. Each graph represents each sub-cluster of the BP. As can be seen, the selected children tended to demonstrate relatively low scores on the developmental strands and relatively high scores on the diagnostic profile. This suggested that they had both missed basic skills in the first stage of learning and that they displayed behaviours likely to influence their performance within the school environment. The task for the nurture teacher's was then to use their knowledge of each individual's profile, their strengths and their weaknesses, to determine the nature of the help needed and plan intervention.

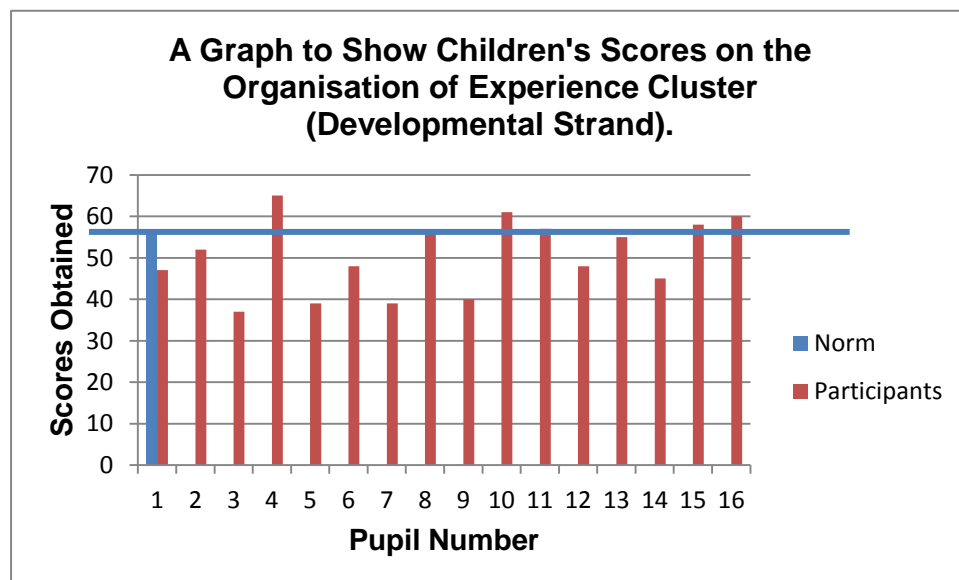


Figure 3.2: Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Organisation of Experience Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.

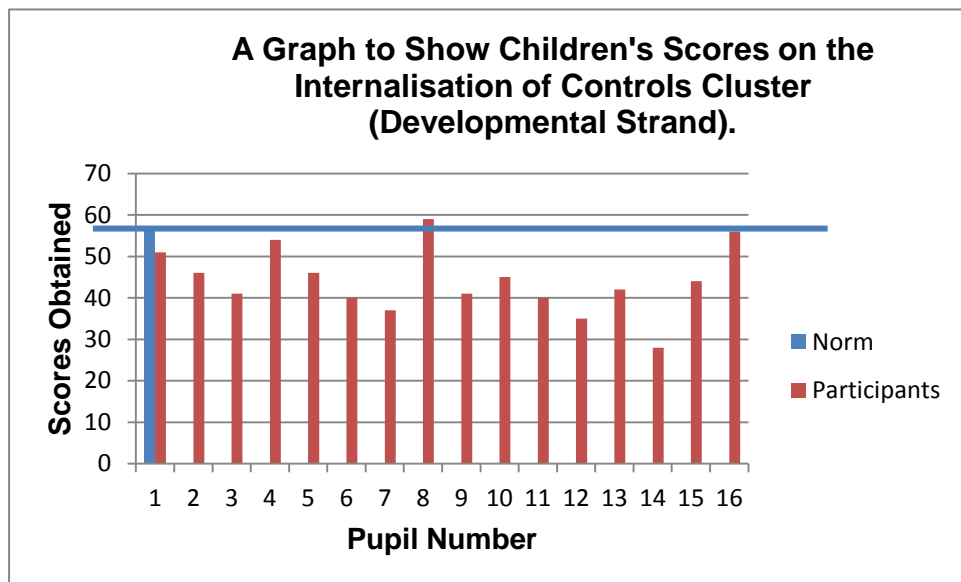


Figure 3.3: Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Internalisation of Controls Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.

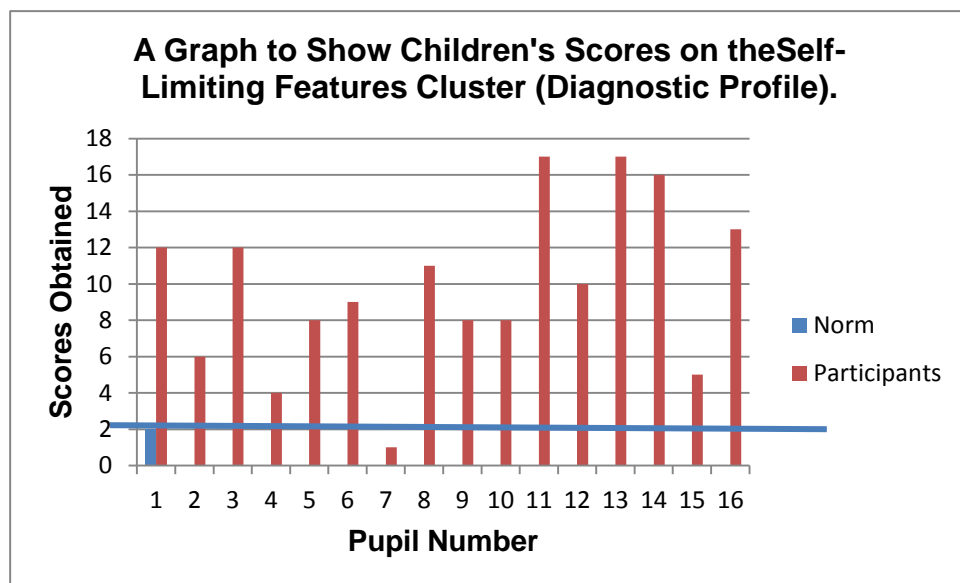


Figure 3.4: Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Self-Limiting Features Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.

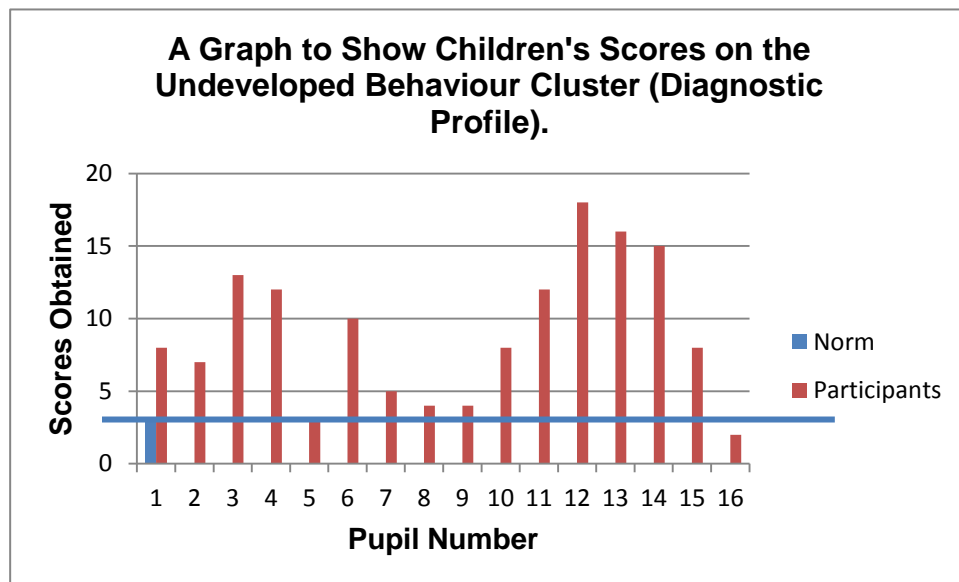


Figure 3.5: Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Undeveloped Behaviour Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.

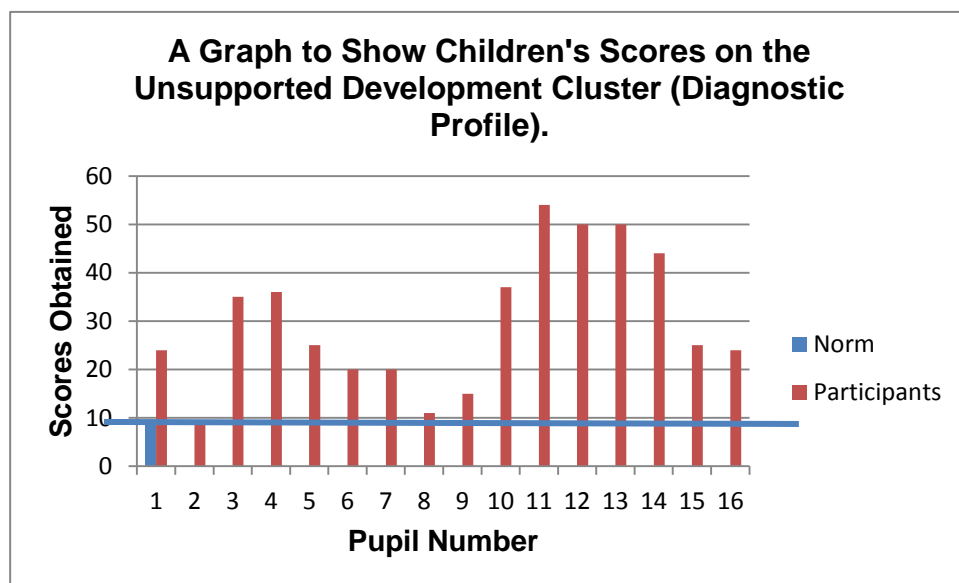


Figure 3.6: Participating Children's Scores on the Boxall Profile Unsupported Development Cluster, in Comparison to the Norm.

(The blue column represents the average score in a sample of competently functioning children (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), whilst the red columns indicate the scores for the sample of children within this research).

Each school having identified 8 children for their NG then sought parental permission for individual children to access the NG. The following table outlines the sampling process undertaken by the researcher once the children had been identified for the NG and parental consent had been obtained for access to the provision.

Stage	Process
1	The researcher met with each school's nurture teacher and outlined the aims of the research. It was agreed that the nurture teacher would contact the caregivers of the children within the group and ask whether they would be willing to meet with the researcher.
2	The nurture teacher made contact with the caregivers of each individual child and confirmed that they were happy to meet with the researcher, arranging a date and time for this meeting.
3	The researcher received the list of all 16 families who were willing to take part and met with caregivers either individually or in a group to provide information pertaining to the research and seek signed consent.
4	The researcher met with each individual child for whom parental consent had been obtained (n=16), established rapport and provided information, before seeking their consent to participate.

Table 3.1: The Participant Sampling Process.

All samples within this study were purposive as the researcher required participants who would be accessing the newly established NGs. Sample size was therefore determined by the number of schools running a NG within the research timeframe and the number of children accessing the NG. With 8 pupils due to access the NG in each of the two schools this provided a total sample of 16 children.

The participants were taken as a whole sample as the focus was in reviewing any change between pre/post-intervention measures and not between schools or individual pupils. This is a common approach within research investigating NGs (as evident from the literature review) due to the small size of the groups and the need to obtain large enough samples to undertake quantitative data

analyses and review change. This can pose certain difficulties due to a level of variation amongst participants and therefore the potential for confounding variables (see section 1.6). However, the groups within this project ran according to the same principles (see section 1.5.1), thereby reducing the influence of context as a confounding variable. Furthermore, although the children were representative of a varied primary cohort, in relation to their age, there are discrepancies within the research literature pertaining to the influence of this variable (see section 2.5). Therefore, given the lack of research considering progress relative to language development, the researcher felt that, at least initially, the identification of any change was more important than breaking the sample down further and preventing a statistical analysis due to the limited sample size.

The table below outlines the final participant sample which consisted of the 16 children in the two NGs. The graphs help to provide a context for the quantitative sample.

School	Pupil Number	Age	Key Stage	Gender	EAL
A	S1	06:08	1	F	Yes
	S2	07:02	1	M	No
	S3	06:01	1	M	No
	S4	07:04	1	F	No
	S5	07:01	1	F	No
	S6	06:03	1	M	No
	S7	06:07	1	F	Yes
	S8	05:09	1	M	No
B	S9	09:01	2	F	No
	S10	07:10	2	F	No
	S11	06:10	1	M	No
	S12	06:09	1	M	No
	S13	09:02	2	F	No
	S14	07:11	2	F	No
	S15	08:00	2	M	No
	S16	07:11	2	F	No

Table 3.2: Characteristics of the Final Participant Sample.

Of the total sample 9 were female and 7 were males, thus a balanced gender mix was represented. The children ranged in age from 5 years and 9 months to 9 years and 2 months at the start of the study and were drawn from key stages 1 and 2, year groups 1 to 4. Therefore, they were representative of a varied primary school cohort with regards to their age. The majority of children were White British and spoke English as their first language, although two children spoke English as an additional language.

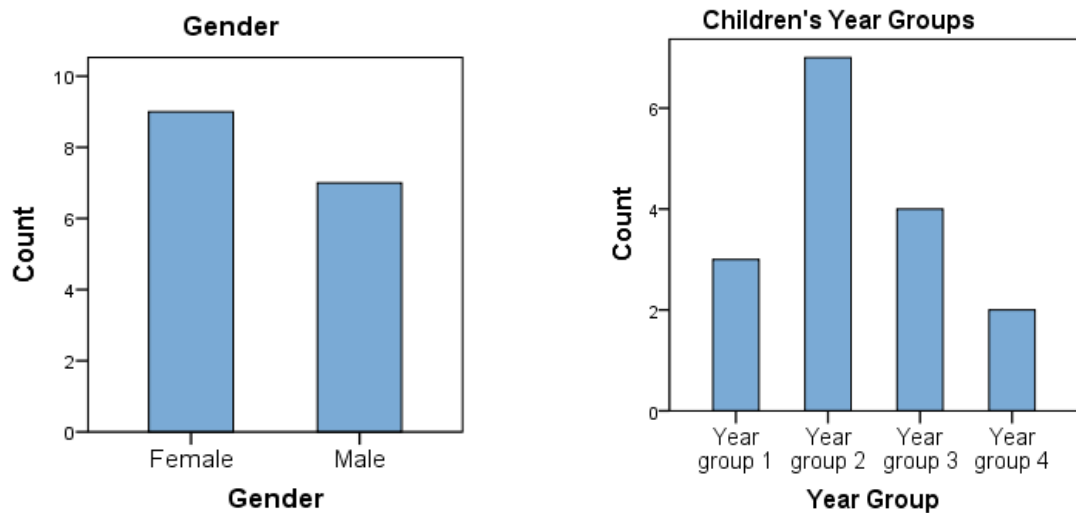


Figure 3.7: Gender Composition and Year Group of the Participating Children.

3.5.2 The Nurture Group Interventions

As outlined previously the participants within this research were drawn from two separate NGs from two separate schools (see section 3.5.1). Although both provisions were governed by the classic 'Boxall' guidelines and Nurture Group Principles (see section 1.5.1) they were not identical. Below therefore is a table which outlines the characteristics of the NGs within this research.

	Nurture Group A	Nurture Group B
Intake	Pupils from one school.	Pupils from one school.
Size	Eight pupils (4 Boys, 4 girls) *2 children with English as an additional language included.	Eight pupils (3 Boys, 5 girls)
Staffing	Two adults (1 class teacher, 1 teaching assistant)	Two adults (1 class teacher, 1 teaching assistant). *Staffing changed 1 month before post-intervention measures were collected due to the class teacher moving on. New staffing included 1 higher level TA and 1 teaching assistant. Both staff members were then therefore supervised by the school's deputy head for support with curriculum planning and delivery.
Timing	Children accessed the provision for 4 out of 10 half day sessions per week.	Children accessed the provision for 5 out of 10 half day sessions per week.
Layout	The group took place in the nursery room, with access to: *A kitchen area *Role play area *Carpet area *Dining table space *Basic classroom furniture *Book area with cushions *An outside play area *Equipment linked to early child development and the foundation stage curriculum *A trolley with additional equipment appropriate for additional curriculum demands. *Areas to display children's achievements.	The group took place in a designated classroom, with access to: *A kitchen area *Role play area *Soft seating area *Dining table space, *Basic classroom furniture *Book area with cushions *An outside play area and school pets, *Equipment appropriate for the curriculum and the children's developmental stages *Display boards and surfaces to present children's achievements. *During the intervention period the designated classroom space was changed. The children had access to the same features within

	<p>(The provision met the 'Nurture Group Environment and Resources' list provided by the nurture group network (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006, p.40)).</p>	<p>the layout of the provision but the facilities were improved with the provision of a greater outside play area and a larger classroom.</p> <p>(The provision met the 'Nurture Group Environment and Resources' list provided by the nurture group network (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006, p.40)).</p>
<p>Curriculum</p> <p><i>Daily Routine</i></p>	<p>The group provided an explicit and predictable daily routine. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Welcome and sharing of news *An outline of the day's timetable and activities *Set periods for curriculum focus *Time dedicated to play and adult-led creative activities *Dining time *A closing/reflection session with time dedicated to recognising the children's achievements. <p>*The group's general content followed the National Curriculum for key stage 1 in line with the children's mainstream classes. However, this was differentiated in respect of their individual developmental levels and therefore at times included aspects of the foundation stage curriculum.</p>	<p>The group provided an explicit and predictable daily routine. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *An outline of the day's timetable and activities *Set periods for curriculum focus *Time dedicated to play and adult-led creative activities *Dining time. *A closing/reflection session with time dedicated to recognising the children's achievements. <p>*The group's general content adhered to key stage 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum with respect to the children's mainstream class groups. However, this was differentiated in respect of their individual developmental levels and therefore at times included aspects of the foundation stage curriculum.</p>
<p><i>National Curriculum</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The nurture group staff liaised with class teachers to share planning. *For example, session content aligned with the work completed in the mainstream class but was delivered at a pace matched to the children's learning needs; with greater opportunities for rehearsal, repetition and experiential learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Initially, the curriculum delivery was akin to that for nurture group 1. *Following staffing changes the nurture group staff joined a planning group to ensure joined up curriculum delivery. *Plans were then authorised by the school's deputy head and the delivery of the content was discussed to support differentiation.

<p><i>Nurture Curriculum</i></p>	<p>*The curriculum covered was approximately two weeks behind what was being covered in the mainstream class to allow for liaison time between staff.</p> <p>Set periods were also dedicated to activities focused upon building the following skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Language and Social Communication i.e. role play and mealtimes. *Co-operation i.e. structured games and construction activities. *Sensory and fine motor skills i.e. sand and water play. *Understanding and regulation of emotions i.e. circle time, 1:1 play with an adult, puppet play. <p>*Adult interaction and modelling also helped to encourage social skills, self-esteem, communication and emotional literacy.</p> <p>*Targeted planning was undertaken to address areas requiring further support and development as indicated by the Boxall Profile. Beyond the Boxall Profile: Strategies and Resources (Evans, 2006) was used as an assistive tool to support this planning.</p>	<p>Set periods were also dedicated to activities focused upon building the following skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Language and Social Communication i.e. role play and mealtimes. *Co-operation i.e. structured games and construction activities. *Sensory and fine motor skills i.e. sand and water play. *Understanding and regulation of emotions i.e. circle time, 1:1 play with an adult, puppet play. <p>*Adult interaction and modelling also helped to encourage social skills, self-esteem, communication and emotional literacy.</p> <p>*Targeted planning was undertaken to address areas requiring further support and development as indicated by the Boxall Profile. Beyond the Boxall Profile: Strategies and Resources (Evans, 2006) was used as an assistive tool to support this planning.</p>
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Table 3.3: A Summary of the Characteristics of the Nurture Group Provisions

To encourage further consistency between the NG provisions, beyond that provided by the nurture group network's guidelines and principles, additional actions were taken. These included:

- The appointment by the local authority of a specialist nurture teacher, whom amongst other tasks was required to: oversee the running of the provisions, support curriculum delivery within the provisions (both national and nurture) and to share good practice between the provisions.
- The organisation of regular strategy meetings. These took place within each school approximately once to twice a term, dependent upon need. The meetings were run by the specialist nurture teacher and the educational psychology service, with the nurture group staff members and the senior management teams in attendance. They sought to: support school staff in establishing their provisions; to address practical issues such as staffing, location and curriculum delivery; to embed nurture group practice within the whole school ethos; to ensure that provisions were developing as planned; and to address and problem solve any issues which may arise.
- The provision of 'nurture network meetings' which were held on a termly basis once the provisions had been established. These were once again run by the specialist nurture teacher and the educational psychology service but involved staff members from both NG provisions, with each school taking it in turn to host. The purpose was to provide a forum at which to share good practice and resources, and to encourage problem solving and peer supervision.
- The delivery of whole school training about nurture groups provided by the educational psychology service. The aim of such training was to help embed the concept of NGs within whole school practice. Whilst tailored to the individual schools this covered information pertaining to attachment theory, nurture groups and the use and implementation of the Boxall Profile.
- Finally, the provisions were also encouraged to work towards quality criteria. For example, they sought to meet the Ofsted criteria for nurture provisions and also aimed to achieve the Boxall Quality Mark Award (Nurture Group Network, 2013a). Whilst the latter was not currently

attainable due to the need for the provisions to be established for two years prior to achieving the award, the schools involved were made aware of the criteria. Therefore, they discussed such criteria at strategy meetings and considered how they could seek to address these, with the aim of taking appropriate actions to address all the necessary objectives and considering how best to gather the appropriate evidence.

The actions outlined therefore had two key aims. One was to provide a process which ensured that the identified provisions were conforming to good practice. An outcome further supported by their adherence to the nurture group guidelines and principles. The other was to ensure that there was a certain consistency between the provisions, with regards to their content and delivery.

3.5.3 Measures and Procedures

A number of quantitative measures were completed immediately following children's entry to the NG, and again eight months later. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of NGs upon children's language and literacy skills. Two assessment tools were employed in accordance with each skill, with one measure completed by the child and one by a familiar adult (caregiver or staff member). This approach allowed for some data triangulation. It also ensured that direct assessment of the child was kept to a minimum, to promote emotional safety and reduce the chance of distress from repeated assessment.

Validity and Reliability

When selecting tools for the research, it was important to consider the reliability and validity of data collection methods, thereby supporting the value of the results (Robson, 2002). Validity is concerned with the extent to which something measures what it is intended to measure (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). It defines whether findings can be seen as accurate representations of the real world (Robson, 2002). For example, construct validity considers whether a tool measures what it suggests to (Robson, 2002), internal validity concerns the extent to which a study has considered extraneous variables (Howitt & Cramer, 2011), and external validity involves the extent to which results can be generalised (Creswell, 2009). Reliability however is concerned with the consistency of items within a measure and how consistent a measure is over

time (Robson, 2002). For example, test-retest reliability measures stability over time, whilst split-half reliability indicates internal reliability and the extent to which items measure the same concept. The reliability and validity of each individual tool used will now be commented upon to support understanding of the value of results, whilst reasons for the selection of certain tools are also shared.

Language Measures

To consider progress and change in children's language skills, Language Link (Speech Link Multimedia Limited, 2011) was completed with the child. This is a standardised measure used by schools within the LA to assess children's receptive language and understanding, as it helps to guide schools in appropriate intervention. This particular tool was deemed useful for the current study as it considers skills needed within the classroom and therefore it was felt that progress may suggest improved capacity to access the mainstream classroom. In addition, the tool allows for retesting and recognition of improvement, whilst it was familiar to schools who were trained to use it. A trained member of staff supports the child in accessing the online programme during which they are required to point to a targeted picture from a choice of 4 images following verbal instruction. During standardisation procedures Language Link was found to have good test-retest reliability, whilst the measure's validity was supported by good correlations with the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) (Semel, Wiig & Secord, 2003) and Test for the Reception of Grammar (TROG) (Bishop, 2003b).

The Children's Communication Checklist (CCC-2) (Bishop, 2003a) provided the second language measure. This is a standardised checklist which considers communicative ability in real world environments. The tool was deemed useful as it screens for receptive, expressive and pragmatic language skills; thus providing an overall picture of language ability. In addition, its assessment of pragmatic (social) language skills was of interest, as this is an area of difficulty for children with SEBD (ANON, 2011; Gilmour, Hill, Place and Suske, 2004; Mackie and Law, 2010) and one which NGs seek to develop through their focus upon language and social skills (Boxall, 2002; NGN, 2011). Therefore, it was of interest to see whether children improved upon this measure. With the

researcher's support to address any questions, children's caregivers completed the checklist rating the frequency with which the child displayed communicative behaviours. The sum of scaled scores (General Communication Composite) gave an index of overall communicative competence and was utilised within this research. The CCC-2 has been found to have high internal consistency across the scales, although inter-rater reliability between parents and professionals is more variable. Validation data from three clinical samples confirmed the CCC-2 as an appropriate screening instrument for significant communication disorders (Bishop, 2003a). However, the checklist does rely on self-report and therefore may be subject to bias.

Literacy Measures

To assess children's literacy skills the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT 4) (Wilkinson and Robertson, 2006) was completed with the children. This measures basic academic skills in word reading, sentence comprehension, spelling and math computation. The measure was selected by the EPS as they wished to obtain a measure of numeracy as well as literacy ability for those children accessing the NGs. Furthermore, the measure utilises two interchangeable forms for re-testing purposes reducing practice effects, and it is quick to administer, a pertinent consideration given its use for children with SEBD. For the purpose of this research only those subtests pertaining to literacy ability were considered. However, fellow members of the researcher's EPS, also involved in evaluating the provisions, analysed results from the math computation sub-test. Assessment was undertaken by the researcher, a TEP qualified to administer the test and standard scores were calculated. Scores obtained on the WRAT 4 correlate highly with the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970) and moderately with various IQ tests (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006); whilst the assessment has good internal consistency, alternate-form reliability is moderate, and practice effects are small (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006).

National Curriculum Levels (NCLs) (DFEE, 1999) provided the second literacy measure and have been used in previous studies investigating NGs and academic outcomes (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Seth-smith, Levi, Pratt, Fonagy & Jaffery, 2010). For the purpose of this research teachers provided a

reading and writing NCL. NCLs provide a measure of attainment relative to children's knowledge, skills and understanding for a subject and suggest how a child's progress compares to that typical for their age. To ensure the reliability and validity of national curriculum assessment, the office of qualifications and examinations regulation (Ofqual) continually review assessment arrangements and produce regulatory frameworks to guide professionals (Ofqual, 2009). This ensures fitness for purpose of the systems in accurately assessing knowledge, skills and understanding. Whilst the measure may be subject to bias due to an element of self-report from teachers, curriculum based assessment is incorporated reducing this effect. Broad performance descriptors can create problems with accurately identifying an appropriate NCL and determining where a child is placed within this, however, the use of typical age related levels assist in part as criterion can be interpreted with respect to the target population (William, 1993).

Measures of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Skills

The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) was also completed for the children in this research, with the aim of identifying those appropriate for NGs. The BP (1998) is standardised for children aged 3 to 8 years old and has been used by many researchers investigating NGs effectiveness (for example, Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). It assesses the child's pattern of functioning through observation of classroom behaviour. The profile has been found to accord well with the SDQ (Goodman, 1997) indicating its validity in measuring behavioural functioning. However, subjective interpretation is possible relative to the aim of the respondent (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). Whilst the BP data is not reported in this research as it did not relate directly to the RQs, children's scores are included on the disc attached to this thesis.

Measures of Attendance

Finally, attendance data was also collected for participants to consider whether their attendance at school improved following access to the NG. To achieve this the schools were asked to provide attendance data for the 8 months during which the participants were in school prior to NG access. This provided a baseline measure of their attendance. They were also then asked to provide

attendance data for the 8 months following the participants' entrance to the provision. A comparison was then made between the two sets of data to determine whether the children's attendance had improved. For ease of analysis the figures provided were converted to percentages, based on the number of school days within the identified periods and the total number of days on which the participant attended. As can be seen from the graph below, of the 16 participants eight displayed a slight improvement in their school attendance. Of the remaining eight participants four showed no change in their attendance levels, whilst four demonstrated a reduction in their attendance following access to the NG.

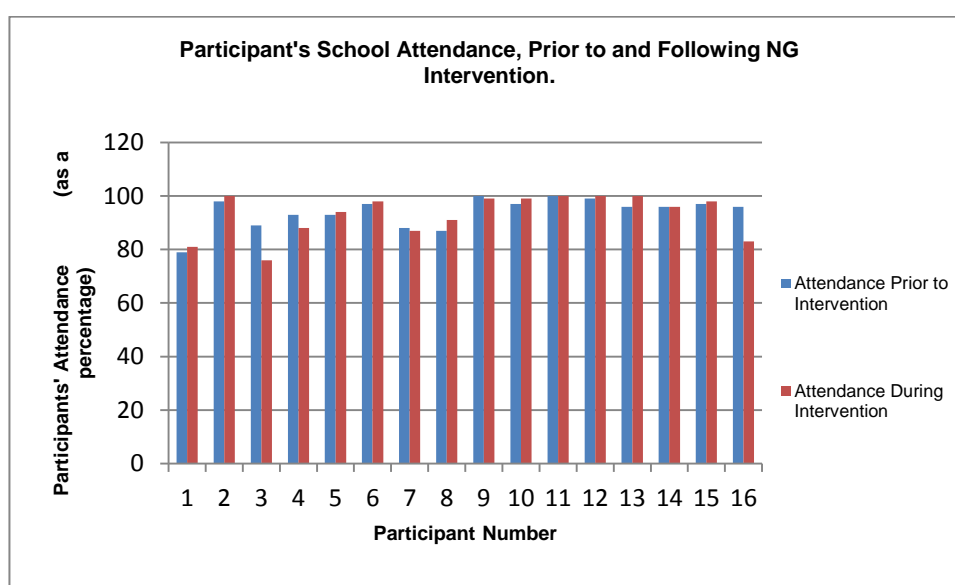


Figure 3.8: A Comparison of School Attendance Data for Participants, Prior to and Following Nurture Group Access

In relation to the two separate NGs the children in NG A showed a reduction in their attendance data, from 91% prior to NG access to 89% following NG entry. The same pattern was evident in NG B with a reduction from 98% to 97%. This is perhaps an unexpected result. However, it should be noted that these figures are likely to be affected by the data of individual students, a factor supported by the contradictory data in the graph presented above, which suggested that the majority of pupils displayed an improvement or no change in their attendance. It is known that some students were affected by factors such as family circumstances, which will have had an impact upon their attendance but which

are not reflected in the data. Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution but may suggest that school attendance could be an interesting factor to consider in future research investigating NGs.

Threats to Validity

As previously outlined, the research measures employed include both strengths and weaknesses, whilst the sampling procedure also has its advantages and disadvantages. However, reasons for selecting these tools and employing these procedures are discussed. The researcher now recognises additional variables which may threaten the validity of findings, meaning that it may not be possible to determine that findings are due solely to children accessing the NG. These are listed below:

- Comparison and control groups were not included in the research due partly to the ethical implications in identifying children with similar difficulties who the LA were then not able to support through intervention. Furthermore, practical issues were also influential, such as the capacity of the researcher to undertake further assessment within a small scale study, and the difficulties inherent in matching participants appropriately. Therefore, the participants' skills may have naturally developed throughout the intervention and this may have influenced the outcome as opposed to the NG alone. However, the predominant approach of the research was the qualitative aspect and it was hoped that this aspect would help to attribute any identified outcomes to the intervention through recognition of the intervening processes.
- The range in children's ages must also be acknowledged as a potentially influential variable, despite the discrepancies in previous research. This may be particularly pertinent when considering progress relative to attainment measures, due to the different stages of cognitive development which children may be at. However, as previously acknowledged, the emphasis initially was in exploring any change, and if necessary considering this further in future research.
- Due to the particular characteristics of the participants, results can only be generalised to individuals who share characteristics with those in the study.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

Analysis was undertaken on the quantitative data obtained using the measures previously described with respect to the two quantitative RQs.

RQ1: Do measures of children's language skills show improvement following access to the nurture group?

RQ2: Do measures of children's literacy skills show improvement following access to the nurture group?

The analysis therefore considered the impact of NGs upon measures of children's language and literacy skills, identifying whether there was a noticeable improvement in these domains following access to the provision.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data and establish patterns. The purpose was to provide a visual representation of the data and to begin exploring differences and variation through the use of mean scores and standard deviations. These statistics were appropriate given the interval data available.

Parametric and Non-Parametric Statistics

Following a descriptive exploration of the dataset the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was employed to consider whether the data was normally distributed and therefore whether parametric tests were deemed appropriate. Subsequently, statistical tests were utilised to determine whether there was a significant difference between participant's pre/post intervention scores and rule out the likelihood of the results occurring by chance. However, it is important that all of the available statistics are interpreted with extreme caution and seen as presenting more of a trend, as due to the small sample size and the limited homogeneity within the group, there may be problems generalising these to the wider population. Whilst the researcher was aware of the difficulties in researching this area the project was felt to be important in highlighting the

academic profile of NGs. In addition, the qualitative aspect of the research was available to provide further support for the quantitative findings.

3.6 The Qualitative Aspect of the Research Project

Whilst this research sought to identify the impact of NGs upon children's language and literacy skills, it also aimed to explore the children's views about the NG, both more generally and in relation to language and literacy development. It was hoped that this would both provide support for the quantitative data and enhance understanding of the NGs benefits, contextualising the data. To access the children's perspectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted to address the following RQs:

RQ 3: What are the children's views about attending the NG?

RQ 4: What are the children's views about whether the NG helped their language and literacy?

3.6.1 Participant Selection

The qualitative sample was drawn from the original quantitative sample. A total of 8 participants, half of the original cohort, contributed to this phase; a large enough sample to represent the children's views whilst small enough to ensure that time was available to access rich data. Four participants were drawn from each school and the final sample consisted of three girls and five boys, drawn from key stages one and two. Children were selected by the nurture teachers on the basis that they would be able to access the questions presented and would be comfortable engaging with the interview.

3.6.2 Measures and Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were carried out face to face by the researcher with the eight children, upon entry to and following access to the NG. The interviews endeavoured to gain an understanding of the NGs influential processes from the children's perspective and to determine whether children's constructs around language and literacy changed.

Semi-structured interviews are frequently used and a main method employed in collecting qualitative data (Flick, 2002). They can be defined as a conversation:

‘initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives’ (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p.307).

The researcher selected this method because it allowed clearly defined purposes whilst enabling flexibility in presentation (Robson, 2002). Some flexibility was important in this study as the researcher wished to seek further elaboration where necessary, whilst the structure achieved by the questions allowed the provision of information relevant to the RQs (Creswell, 2003). Whilst a framework was useful in guiding responses to relevant areas, it was felt that a structured interview could have resulted in information loss, as the participants’ nature suggested that they may benefit from prompts, additional explanation, and alternative wording on occasion. Questions within the framework fell into three broad categories in line with the qualitative RQs:

- 1) Participant’s experiences of the NG,
- 2) Participant’s experiences of the NG relative to their language and literacy development.
- 3) Participant’s constructs around language and literacy.

The interview script and associated prompts can be viewed in appendix 3. Whilst it is recognised that semi-structured interviews raise reliability issues due to a lack of standardisation and the possible bias of the researcher’s presence (Robson, 2002), they can provide rich information and enable the exploration of multiple realities (Creswell, 2003).

Prior to the research being conducted, the value and feasibility of using interviews with young children was considered. In addition, the researcher’s own experience of eliciting views and responses from young children was drawn upon. It was acknowledged that the interviewer needed certain skills to conduct effective interviews, namely for eliciting detailed and relevant responses. As the researcher conducting the interviews was a TEP with

relevant experience of working with children with complex issues, this tool was deemed appropriate. As noted within the literature review there is increasing recognition of the importance of establishing the views of children, which is being advocated through literature, research, and legislation (DfES, 2001, 2002a; DfE, 2013; Gersch, 1996; Todd, 2003a, 2003b; United Nations, 1989). As Costley (2000) outlines

'We would not think of constructing a case study without collecting the opinions of the adults involved in a situation, so why would we ignore the views of the consumers of education- the children?' (p.172).

Indeed, Todd (2003a) argues that accessing pupils' views about interventions enhances the likelihood of successful outcomes. However, it is important that consideration is given to the practicalities of accessing children's voices (Gray, 2004). Whilst interviewing is a common approach to encouraging children's participation (Todd, 2003b), issues do arise including: delivering questions at the right level, establishing trust, and finding ways to avoid response bias (Cohen, Manion & Lawrence, 2000). For example, Armstrong (1995) found that when children were asked for their views they often failed to respond as they did not know how to reply. Therefore, whilst children's views were desired in order to better understand the NG intervention, there was a need to think creatively about how to encourage responses during interviews. Todd (2003b) identified that using scaling can help to involve the child, whilst Lewis (2002) found the use of cue cards prompted more detailed responses. These are both techniques which the researcher has found to be beneficial in her own practice and thus it was decided to incorporate these elements (appendix 4). During post-intervention interviews, following advice from a colleague, the use of a puppet was also introduced to encourage more detailed responses. The use of pilot interviews as outlined below helped to construct appropriate questions and to pitch these at the right level.

Pilot of Interview Questions

To uncover information relevant to the RQs, the interview questions addressed the three key areas previously outlined, and instigated the children's thinking in these domains. The researcher drew upon 'The Pupil Voice' (ANON, 2007) to

devise the basic interview structure as she had found the tool useful when eliciting children's responses in her work as a TEP. This is a tool used by the EPS and other professionals within the researcher's LA to access children's perceptions about school and learning. It uses scaling, symbols, and open-ended questions to encourage a response which can then be explored further through questioning. When seeking information relative to language and literacy development the researcher asked children more specifically about their reading and writing, and their ability to both listen and talk to others. It was felt that breaking the skills down in this way would make the questions more accessible for the children. These areas also related to the skills being assessed through quantitative measures, thereby allowing some triangulation of the data, and they constitute areas of focus within the NG curriculum (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Prior to their use within the research the interview questions were piloted with 3 primary school children. This initial investigation prompted a slight change to the wording of some questions, making them easier to understand and more accessible to the children. Furthermore, discussion with colleagues prompted the use of practice items to support children's understanding and prepare them for the activity.

Interview Structure

Pre and post interviews were carried out one to one with the children within a quiet area in the school. During pre-intervention interviews the children were asked questions from the third section of the interview script, relating to their constructs around language and literacy (appendix 3). In post-intervention interviews they were asked questions from sections one, two and three of the script (appendix 3). Sections one and two concerned the children's experience of NGs and were therefore only relevant post-intervention. It was necessary to complete section three pre- and post-intervention to determine any change in the children's constructs following NG access. As the same questions were asked on both occasions it is possible that this may have impacted upon findings, although the effect was felt to be minimised as the duration between interviews was approximately seven months.

With permission from parents and children interviews were taped on a digital recorder to support transcription. Although using a recorder may have

influenced participants' responses this did not appear to have an impact, and the process enabled a verbatim account of the interviews which was necessary to support the thematic analysis of the data (Robson, 2002; Willig, 2001). The table below outlines the interview process.

Interview Stage	Procedure
1	The child was greeted by the researcher and informed of the process. Consent was sought to tape the interview and the child was told of their right to refuse answers. Time was spent establishing rapport.
2	The recorder was turned on. The child was then shown relevant materials (i.e. scales, symbols) (appendix 12) and provided with an explanation of different points on the scale and different symbols. Subsequently the child was presented with practice items to familiarise them with the use of materials and encourage their ease with the researcher. Positive discussion also aimed to facilitate this i.e. tell me something you're good at/enjoy doing.
3	The child was presented with the main interview questions in accordance with the three categories of the framework outlined previously. Symbols and scales were used to prompt responses. The researcher used prompt questions to encourage elaboration i.e. 'why did you place the symbol there?'
4	Children were thanked for their help and offered a sticker as a 'thank you' for participating.

Table 3.4: The Interview Process

3.6.3 Data Analysis

To interpret the findings obtained from the collection of qualitative data, thematic analysis (TA) was undertaken to support answers to RQs three and

four. TA is used widely within qualitative analyses (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001) and is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). In contrast to some qualitative techniques TA seeks patterns across the data set rather than within a data item, aiming to uncover recurring patterns of meaning (themes) which represent the material effectively (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Braun & Clarke (2006) identify that a theme:

‘Captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.’ (p.82)

The approach can be particularly useful in under-researched areas or where participants’ views regarding a topic are unknown as it can provide a rich description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the researcher was aware of the paucity of research investigating children’s views about the impact of NGs upon learning, this approach was felt to be beneficial in contributing to that knowledge, whilst also adding to understanding regarding children’s views of NGs. Furthermore, it is a technique which can be employed across a range of epistemological approaches making it more accessible to novices, a pertinent consideration within this research.

Justification for Thematic Analysis

TA sits well with the critical realist perspective (Willig, 1999) as it can recognise how individuals are making meaning of their experiences whilst retaining a focus on reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006); thereby helping to uncover the mechanisms underlying the patterns of events. However, the researcher also considered other analytic tools before selecting TA as the most appropriate. For example, whilst content analysis can be viewed as similar to thematic approaches it is often used to allow quantitative analyses of qualitative data (Robson, 2002). This was in contrast to the current research’s focus and therefore the approach was not felt to be appropriate. Similarly, both narrative and discourse analysis were considered. However, discourse analysis is concerned with participant’s specific language use (Willig, 2003), whilst narrative seeks patterns within a data item (Murray, 2003), neither of which were features appropriate to this research. Finally, Interpretive

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and grounded theory were reviewed and disregarded, as IPA is tied to a phenomenological epistemology whilst grounded theory seeks to develop theory from the data (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

Given the aims of TA and its alignment with the critical realist perspective, this research therefore adopted this approach as the most appropriate method for analysing the qualitative data. However, there is no clear agreement as to how TA should be conducted and researchers have noted that unsatisfactory detail is often provided when reporting the process and detail of analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To clarify the application of TA, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) outline six stages to the process. This approach was therefore employed within this research to ensure a methodologically sound approach. The researcher played an active role in the analysis, meaning that the themes did not reside in the data, rather the researcher selected features of interest and identified themes by creating links within the data (Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997). The stages of TA are shown in the following table (table 3.4) and the findings reported in chapter four.

The Thematic Analysis Method Employed

Without understanding the assumptions and analytic methods informing analyses, it is hard to evaluate other's research (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Therefore, it is important to outline the type of TA undertaken. This research employed a combined inductive and deductive TA, as outlined below, and a semantic approach was adopted whereby the researcher did not look for anything beyond what the participants had said (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In line with the Critical Realist position the researcher had a particular analytic interest in outcomes relative to the NG and processes which may have influenced these outcomes. Therefore, she used the RQs in a very broad way to frame the analysis. TA was undertaken across the data set but in relation to separate sections of the interviews which were guided by the RQs. For example, whilst the first section of the transcript addressed children's responses to the NG, the second section addressed NGs relative to language and literacy development; and these sections were analysed separately. It was felt that

analysing the different interview sections in this way would help to clarify and keep separate outcomes/processes relative to the intervention in general and outcomes/processes more specifically related to the impact of NGs upon language and literacy development. The researcher felt that this would help to provide richer understanding relative to the intervention. In this way the analysis was more deductive and themes were identified for specific RQs encouraging a 'more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). However, it was also inductive in that the researcher sought codes and themes which arose from children's perceptions, coding for themes that were 'bottom up' and linked to the data as opposed to drawing on previous literature.

Stage	Title	Process
1	Data Familiarisation	The data obtained from semi-structured interviews was transcribed verbatim and collated by both the researcher and a member of the EPS administrative team (one full transcript can be found in appendix 14 and the remaining transcripts are included on the accompanying disc). For those interviews transcribed by a colleague, the researcher completed an additional check, reading through and completing the transcription in conjunction with the audio feedback, in order to familiarise herself with the data. The researcher then repeatedly and actively read through the whole of the transcribed data to further familiarise herself with this, making notes to mark initial ideas relative to meanings and patterns.
2	Identification of Initial Codes	<p>From an initial list of content and features of interest in the data, initial codes were produced to capture elements of the data that drew the researcher's attention. Coding can be either data driven and dependent upon the data itself, or theory driven and guided by specific questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the researcher had specific questions the analysis was data driven, meaning that codes were dependent upon the data itself.</p> <p>The researcher worked systematically through the entire data set, relative to each interview section, manually organising data into meaningful groups based on a particular feature or code (Tuckett, 2005). Codes were identified by letters and documented using a codebook system (Boyatzis, 1998), ensuring that all meaningful units of data could be recognised. The researcher's codebooks and an example of a coded transcript can be found in appendices 13 and 14 respectively.</p>
3	Searching for Themes	Codes were then sorted into initial themes with the relevant data extracts and subsequently organised into main themes and sub-themes. A theme is something within the data which is important to the RQs (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and these were devised through the researcher's judgement.

		The researcher began to organise the dataset and structure the findings. Visual representations assisted the process and initial thematic maps were developed relative to sections one and two of children's interviews. The end result was an initial collection of themes and sub-themes with coded data extracts attached.
4	Reviewing Themes	<p>Themes relative to each interview section were reviewed at the level of the coded extracts to confirm a coherent pattern and reworked if necessary. Additionally further refinements in the form of subthemes and subordinate subthemes were created to accurately differentiate the data, and thematic maps were amended accordingly by the researcher.</p> <p>The entire data set was then reviewed to confirm the validity of individual themes and identify that the thematic maps portrayed the meanings apparent in the data set as a whole, relative to particular sections of the interviews.</p>
5	Defining Themes	Collated data extracts for each theme were reviewed to identify their story and define the theme. Consideration was given to what was of interest about the theme and why. Data extracts were provided as evidence to support the themes and uphold the researcher's argument.
6	Reporting the Analysis	An account of the data in relation to the presented RQs was produced. Information gleaned from the literature review also fed in. This allowed the researcher to highlight the wider picture of the data and report on the analysis.

Table 3.5: The Stages of Thematic Analysis

3.6.4: Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Data

Qualitative data faces criticism for being subjective and unreliable (Howitt & Crammer, 2011). Therefore, the collection and analysis of qualitative data must be thorough (Robson, 2002) and transparent. In particular, the researcher must acknowledge the potential for bias, as qualitative processes rely on human decision, raising questions regarding the data's representativeness (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, Robson, 2002). To limit this influence, the researcher aimed to be reflexive and aware of her impact. Therefore she engaged in discussion with supervisors and kept a diary throughout the process. This enabled her to consider: her position within the research, the impact of her own values, and her contribution to the construction of meanings (Creswell, 2003); thus strengthening the research's validity.

Credibility in qualitative research is similar to internal validity within quantitative research and concerns the extent to which 'the subject of enquiry was accurately identified and defined' (Robson, 2002, p.403). To support the findings' credibility, the researcher considered a number of cases, allowing to some degree triangulation of the data, whilst supportive data was also available from quantitative measures. Importantly, discrepant information was also acknowledged and reported (Creswell, 2003). For example, one child's post-intervention interview appeared to have been heavily influenced by a negative experience within the NG that morning, leading him to report negatively on his entire experience. Nevertheless his opinions are presented despite contrasting heavily with that of others'. Furthermore, to confirm accuracy relevant to the interpretation of the findings, a colleague reviewed the analyses and conclusions confirming their meaningful representation.

Finally, to support the reliability of the methods employed, and the subsequent findings, the researcher aimed to be transparent in her approach employing an audit trail to explain her actions (Robson, 2002). This was achieved through a complete record of research activities with the researcher demonstrating what she did and acknowledging why interpretations were made. A balanced account of the data collection procedures was provided, acknowledging why

certain approaches were used and potential weaknesses in these methods. In addition, an audit trail of the data analysis was presented in the outline of the stages of TA (see pages 68 & 93) and detailed extracts were presented to support the validity of findings. Furthermore, the researcher explicitly acknowledged her epistemological position recognising its influence upon the research process and interpretation of findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical practice protects participants by promoting high standards and acknowledging the control of power (BPS, 2009; 2010). In accordance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009), the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010) and the Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students (HCPC, 2012), ethical considerations were adhered to in this research. The researcher received ethical approval from the University of East London's School of Psychology prior to the research being conducted (appendix 5).

Informed Consent

As this research involved participants under 16 years old, informed consent was sought from parents. This was achieved following a meeting between the caregiver and the researcher during which information was provided detailing the overall research aim and what participation would entail for themselves and their child. An information leaflet was shared to support decision making and a consent form provided (appendices 6 & 7). Parents were also informed of their rights relative to withdrawing from the study.

Informed consent was also sought from individual children. In this instance the researcher sat down with the child to provide them with information about what an EP is, why they were involved in their NG and what the child may be asked to do (appendix 8). The child was then asked to complete a consent form indicating that they were happy to participate (appendix 9).

Finally, consent was sought from the head teachers of the participating schools (appendices 10 & 11).

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Throughout the research all the data obtained was kept securely within a locked unit at the EPS base and if stored electronically was held within a password-protected drive. In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1984) all identifying information was removed and participants were informed that their data was confidential. Therefore, schools' and participants' were referred to by number or pseudonyms within transcripts and where data was reported, to protect their identity. Whilst an additional agent was employed to assist with interview transcriptions, they worked for the EPS administrative team and were informed of the confidentiality of the information they were accessing and the need to anonymise transcripts. Following analysis of interview data audio files were destroyed. All data obtained during the research process will be stored for five years before being destroyed.

Protection from Harm

To promote the children's emotional safety care was taken to build rapport before engaging in assessment work, and direct assessment of the child was kept to a minimum.

Children selected to engage in individual interviews were informed that they were free to ask questions, to refuse answers to questions and to terminate the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. The researcher conducted all interviews and was able to demonstrate sensitivity and empathy as appropriate due to her knowledge and experience of working with children.

All children were informed that they were free to discuss the research process with a trusted adult at any time. Parents were also offered the opportunity to contact the researcher to discuss the process or the available findings.

3.8 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter has considered the research methodology, providing justifications for the approaches used. The following section now presents the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data and the findings obtained.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter outlined the research methodology. This chapter details the findings obtained from the research process. Initially, findings are presented from analysis of the quantitative data. This applied to data obtained from several sources including: the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT4) (Wilkinson and Robertson, 2006), National Curriculum Levels (NCLs) (DFEE, 1999), The Children's Communication Checklist (CCC-2) (Bishop, 2003) and Language Link (LL) (Speech Link Multimedia Limited, 2011). Subsequently, findings from thematic analyses of the qualitative data are shared. This data was obtained through interviews with eight children (see section 3.6.1).

4.2 Findings from the Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the research results obtained through assessment of the children's language and literacy skills. Data was collected both upon entry to the NG, and again eight months later, to determine any improvement in these skills following NG access (a spreadsheet of all available results and the relevant SPSS outputs can be found on the disc attached to this thesis).

Quantitative data was analysed from a sample of 16 children who were accessing NGs (see section 3.5.1). Participants ranged in age and were drawn from two separate schools and NGs. During the analyses the children were taken as a whole sample as the focus was in reviewing any change between pre/post-intervention measures and not between schools or individual pupils. As evident from the literature review this is a common approach within research investigating NGs given the small size of the groups. Potential difficulties with this approach have been acknowledged (see section 1.6), and the researcher has advised caution when interpreting the results (see section 3.5.3), recognising that these may be seen to suggest more of a trend within the data to explore further. However, the research's quantitative aspect was deemed both appropriate and important given its aim to highlight the academic profile of NGs and the research's unique aspect in considering change to children's language development. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the inclusion of the

qualitative aspect would add strength to the findings by both supporting and expanding upon the quantitative results.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyse the data and determine any difference between pre/post-intervention scores. Initially, findings are presented descriptively using mean scores and graphical displays. Subsequently, results from statistical analyses are provided. It was hypothesised, on the basis of previous research, that there would be differences between scores and that post-intervention language and literacy scores would be higher.

4.2.1 Assessment of Children's Language Skills

This section will consider results from both the CCC-2 and LL data in turn. To compare differences between the results obtained mean scores were calculated pre/post intervention for children's 'general communicative competence score' (CCC-2) and their LL standard score. As both measures provided interval data in the form of standardised scores it was felt appropriate to incorporate the use of mean scores as a descriptive statistic, as these scores would form the statistic used by statistical tests during analysis, thereby allowing consistency between approaches.

It is important to acknowledge the use of standard scores in contrast to the use of raw scores in the analysis of the data, as this influences the progress observed. A raw score is the original score on a test (i.e. how many the participant got right) before it is statistically adjusted. However, a standard score is the test score of the participant expressed as the deviation of the score from the mean score of the sample. The standard score is another way to compare the participant's performance to the standardisation sample and is based on a normal distribution with a mean and a standard deviation. Of importance when considering the results obtained, is that if a standard score is to stay the same, a raw score must still increase between time 1 (pre-intervention) and time 2 (post-intervention). Therefore, this is a type of progress. Consequently, where results indicate that there has not been a statistically significant improvement, this does not necessarily mean there has been no progress; indeed progress may become more apparent through consideration of the raw scores.

Conversely, if a standard score is seen to increase this would suggest an even greater change in raw scores between time 1 and time 2. Subsequently, where a statistically significant difference is observed between pre- and post-mean scores, this would suggest that more progress has been made than would be expected.

Children's Communication Checklist Data

Scores were available for 15 of the 16 children on the CCC-2. Unfortunately data was missing for the 16th participant as the caregiver was unavailable to complete the post-intervention measure.

Variable	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Composite Score Pre- Intervention	15	46.40	9.94
Communication Composite Score Post Intervention	15	53.53	13.16

Table 4.1: CCC-2 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Pre/Post-Intervention.

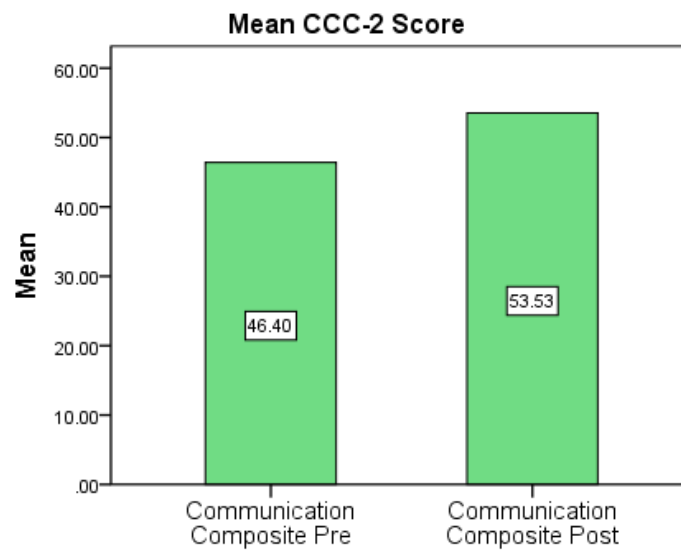


Figure 4.1: CCC-2 Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.

The graph above indicates a difference between the means calculated for the CCC-2 data pre/post-intervention. The mean score for the pre-measure was 46.40 and the mean score for the post-measure was 53.53. Whilst a causal relationship cannot be assumed as the result may have occurred by chance, this increase in score across the quantitative sample indicates an improvement in children's general communicative competence following NG access. However, it should be acknowledged that the standard deviations are relatively high which may be of concern within a small sample. This is likely due to the reduced homogeneity within the sample as a result of the varied age range, but would suggest that there is a degree of variation in children's scores on this measure. As noted previously (section 3.5.2) this variation in the children's ages may have impacted upon results and therefore is likely to have contributed to the standard deviation scores on all measures. Interestingly, given the mean scores, results would suggest that in comparison to the normal population the children accessing the NG are experiencing apparent difficulties in this domain.

Assessing for Normal Distribution

Prior to completing statistical analyses to determine whether there was a significant improvement in the children's language skills following NG access, and reduce the likelihood of the results happening by chance, the Kolmogorov-

Smirnov statistical test of normality was employed. This test was employed to determine whether the data met a main assumption of parametric statistical tests; that the data is normally distributed, and thereby confirm whether the use of such tests was appropriate. The test was undertaken on each dependent variable (i.e. pre and post CCC-2) to test for normality. Furthermore, an additional assumption of the Paired Samples t-Test, a parametric test employed for establishing differences, is that difference scores (the difference between scores obtained pre and post intervention) are normally distributed. Therefore a test was also completed on these scores.

Measure		Number of Participants	Significance
Communication	Composite Pre	15	0.200
Communication	Composite Post	15	0.156
Communication	Composite Difference	15	0.200

Table 4.2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for CCC-2 Data.

The results obtained are not significant as the value for each dependent variable and the difference score is greater than 0.05. This therefore implies that the data distribution is normal and that parametric tests can be employed.

Parametric Statistical Tests

Given that the CCC-2 provided interval level data which was shown to be normally distributed, parametric statistical tests were deemed appropriate for the analysis. Therefore Paired Samples t-Test's were undertaken to assess the likelihood of the results occurring by chance. This test was employed as it is applicable to repeated measures designs and it evaluates whether the mean of the difference between variables is significant.

A paired samples t-Test was conducted to evaluate whether there was an improvement in children's communication composite scores, as measured by the CCC-2, following access to the NG. The results indicated that the mean post score ($M=53.53$, $SD=13.16$) was significantly greater than the mean pre score ($M=46.40$, $SD=9.94$), $t = 1.772$, $df (14)$, $p=0.049$. The standardised effect size d was 0.4 indicating a small effect size. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was 1.50 to 15.76. Given the use of standard scores in this analysis the statistically significant difference would suggest that the children made more progress on this measure than would be expected (see page 74).

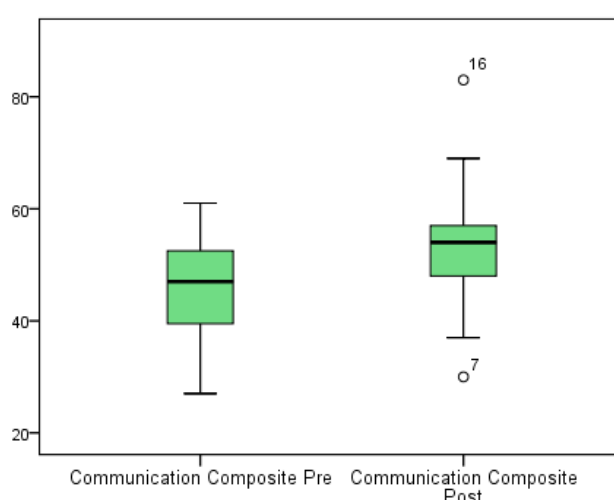


Figure 4.2: Boxplots of Communication Composite Scores

The graph above displays the distribution in the children's scores pre/post-intervention. The whiskers would suggest a slight skew pre-intervention with greater variation in the bottom 25% of scores. Interestingly the distribution is more symmetrical post-intervention, and not only has the median score seemingly increased but the variation in children's scores has reduced. Furthermore, the scores within the lowest quartile have obviously increased confirming that the children's scores were higher post-intervention. It is however important to note that outliers are evident which will have had some impact upon results.

Language Link Data

Pre and post scores were only available for 10 of the 16 participants on LL as six children were beyond the test's age remit post-intervention and results could not therefore be included. The measure was originally employed as it was a tool familiar to the schools and considerate of skills necessary for the classroom. During the research process publishers were working to extend the age range of the assessment by including further items and standardising the newly developed tool on an older population. Whilst it was anticipated that this new assessment tool would be available when collecting post-intervention data this was unfortunately not the case.

Variable	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Link Standard Score Pre intervention	10	101.40	14.90
Language Link Standard Score Post Intervention	10	104.40	10.88

Table 4.3: Language Link Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Pre/Post-Intervention.

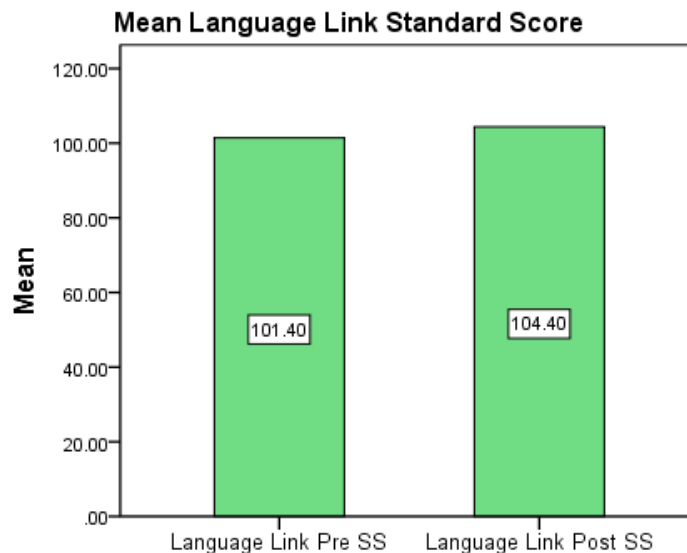


Figure 4.3: Language Link Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.

The means calculated for the LL data pre/post-intervention also display a difference with a mean score of 101.40 pre-intervention and 104.40 post-intervention. This increase in standard score across the quantitative sample indicates an improvement in children's receptive language ability, as measured by Language Link, following access to the NG. Although, once again a causal relationship cannot be assumed. On this occasion consideration of the mean score would suggest that the children accessing the NG are performing within the average range relative to their receptive language ability.

Assessing for Normal Distribution

As with the CCC-2, tests of normality were completed on the LL data. The results are displayed below. They indicate normal distribution for each dependent variable and the difference score as evident by the non-significant results. Therefore parametric tests could be employed with these variables to assess the likelihood of the results occurring by chance. It is however important to bear in mind that the results should continue to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size which also influences their generalisability.

Measure	Number of Participants	Significance
Language Link Pre	10	0.200
Language Link Post	10	0.200
Language Link Difference	10	0.200

Table 4.4: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for Language Link Data.

Parametric Statistics

A Paired Samples t-Test was completed to evaluate whether there was an improvement in children's LL scores following access to the NG. The results indicated that there was not a significant improvement $t=1.122$, $df(9)$, $p=0.145$. The mean post score ($M=104.40$, $SD=10.88$) was not significantly different from the mean pre score ($M=101.40$, $SD=14.90$). As noted previously however, the use of standard scores in contrast to using raw scores may have masked the extent of the children's progress, as a raw score must increase even for a standard score to remain the same (see page 74). Given the increase in the mean score therefore this would suggest that progress is evident, as the mean standard score has increased although not at a significant level. Therefore, progress may have been more readily observed in the children's raw scores.

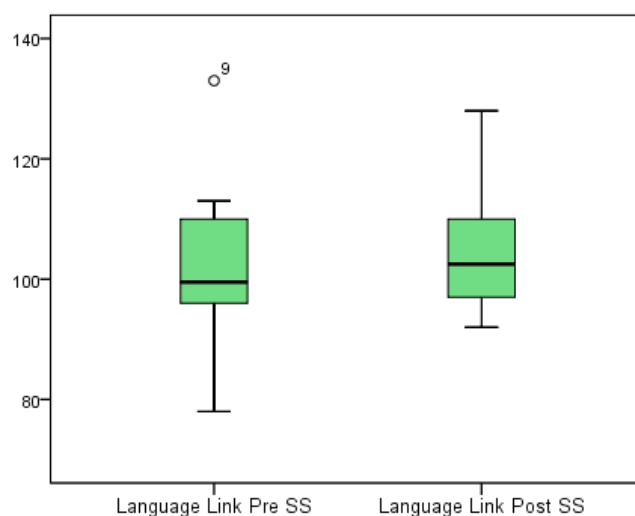


Figure 4.4: Boxplots of Language Link Standard Scores

The above graph displays the distribution of children's scores pre/post-intervention. Once again, the whiskers are of interest as whilst they suggest that pre-intervention the range within the bottom 25% of scores is much greater, the opposite is true post-intervention with the range being greater in the top 25%. This suggests a slight skew in the distribution of data which shifts in the appropriate direction to suggest improvement. Although the boxes are of similar size pre/post-intervention suggesting similar distribution, the median is higher post-intervention and the majority of scores within the interquartile range appear to fall above this. As descriptive statistics suggest an improvement in the right direction, it is possible that the result is due to a type 2 error and the effect of a small sample size. Variation in children's scores as evident by the standard deviation may also have had some impact upon results.

Overview

The results obtained from measures of children's language skills present a mixed picture with both significant (CCC-2) and non-significant (LL) findings. However, descriptive statistics for both measures indicate a positive change, therefore, the results suggest that measures of children's language skills show some improvement following NG access.

4.2.2 Assessment of Children's Literacy Skills

Having considered the data obtained from children's language measures, this section will now present the results obtained from the analysis of both the WRAT4 and the NCL data.

Wide Range Achievement Test Data

The use of the WRAT 4 in assessing literacy provided standardised scores for children's word reading, spelling, sentence comprehension, and reading composite and thus provided interval level data. Consequently mean scores were calculated pre/post-intervention to compare differences. As with the data obtained for children's language measures the use of standard scores for children's literacy measures must be acknowledged, with recognition of the influence of standard scores upon the progress observed (see page 74). Data was available for 16 participants on this measure.

Variable	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation
Word Reading Pre- Intervention	16	89.43	18.16
Word Reading Post- Intervention	16	93.50	15.13
Spelling Pre- Intervention	16	87.43	12.40
Spelling Post- Intervention	16	93.68	16.01
Sentence Comprehension Pre-Intervention	16	13.25	36.23
Sentence Comprehension Post-Intervention	16	44.87	53.12
Reading Composite Pre-Intervention	16	13.18	36.23
Reading Composite Post-Intervention	16	45.06	53.53

Table 4.5: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the WRAT 4 Pre/Post-Intervention.

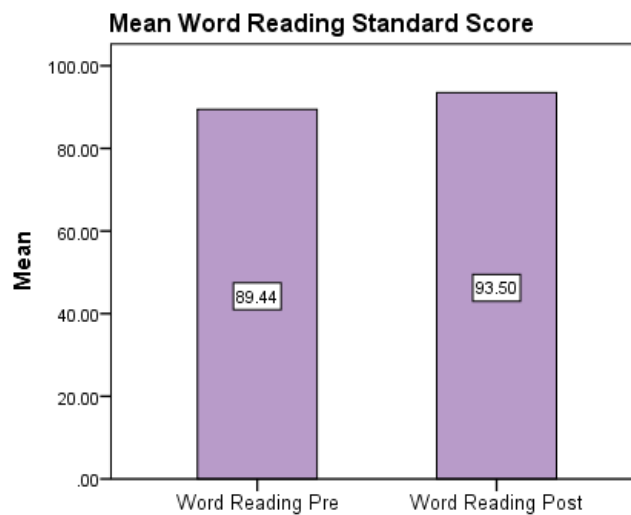


Figure 4.5: Word Reading Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.

The graph above indicates a difference between the mean scores calculated for the word reading data pre/post-intervention. Whilst the mean score for the pre-measure was 89.44 the mean score for the post measure was 93.50. Although a causal relationship cannot be assumed as the result may have occurred by chance, this increase in score across the quantitative sample indicates an improvement in children's word reading ability following access to the NG. Consideration of the mean scores would suggest that children accessing the NG fall just within the average range pre-intervention, whilst their positioning is stronger post-intervention.

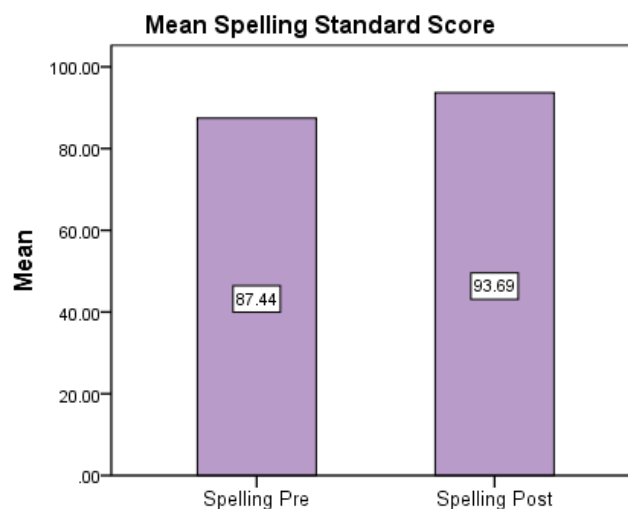


Figure 4.6: Spelling Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.

The mean scores calculated for children's spelling ability pre/post-intervention also display a difference with a mean score of 87.44 pre-intervention and 93.69 post-intervention. This increase in standard score across the quantitative sample indicates an improvement in children's spelling ability, as measured by the WRAT 4, following access to the NG. However, once again a causal relationship cannot be assumed. In this instance the children's mean scores in comparison to the normal population follow the same pattern as that outlined for word reading, with a stronger positioning evident post-intervention.

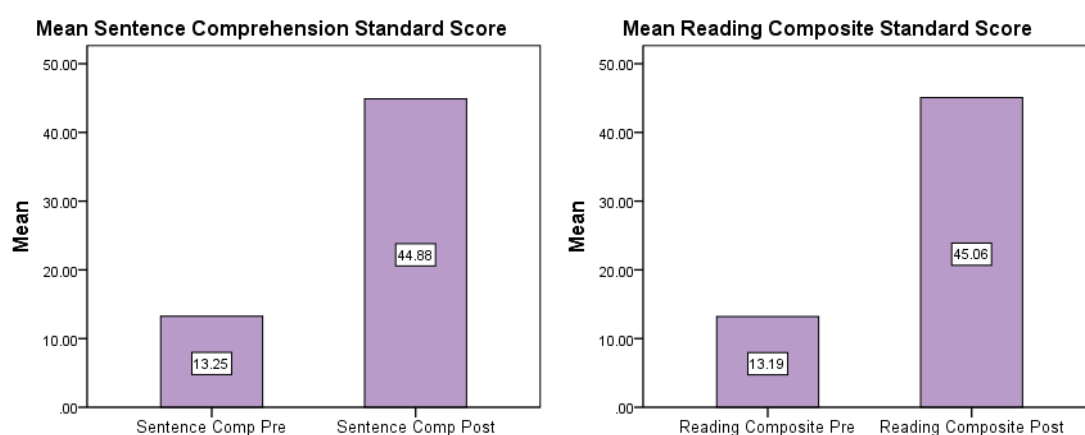


Figure 4.7: Sentence Comprehension and Reading Composite Mean Scores Pre and Post NG.

Finally, the mean scores for children's sentence comprehension and reading composite scores also suggest an improvement following NG access, with an increase in score from 13.25 to 44.88 and 13.19 to 45.06 respectively. However, it is important to note the significant discrepancy between children's pre/post-intervention scores on each sub-test resulting from the children's ability to access the task. At pre-intervention only 2 of the 16 children were able to score on these tests whilst this number increased to 7 post-intervention. This is of interest as it would suggest that the children's ability to read and comprehend sentences had markedly improved post-intervention. However, it also suggests the presence of a floor effect, given the number of children unable to access the task pre-intervention. Therefore, it was not deemed appropriate to analyse this data further using statistical tests. Interestingly, although improvement is evident, the mean scores would suggest that this is a skill which children find

particularly difficult in comparison to the normal population, and it is of interest to compare these results with that of word reading where mean scores fell within the average range.

Testing for Normality

As with the language measures previously, tests of normality were completed on the WRAT 4 word reading and spelling data to determine the appropriate use of parametric tests. The results are displayed below. They indicate normal data distribution as the value for each dependent variable and the difference score is greater than 0.05 providing non-significant results. Therefore, parametric tests can be employed with these variables.

Measure	Number of Participants	Significance
Word Reading Pre	16	0.192
Word Reading Post	16	0.200
Word Reading Difference	16	0.200
Spelling Pre	16	0.200
Spelling Post	16	0.190
Spelling Difference	16	0.200

Table 4.6: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results for WRAT4 Data.

Parametric Statistics

Paired Samples t-Tests were undertaken on the WRAT 4 word reading and spelling scores as these tests are applicable to repeated measures designs and can be employed to evaluate differences. These tests assess the likelihood of the results occurring by chance.

Firstly, a Paired Samples t-Test was completed to evaluate whether there was an improvement in children's word reading scores following access to the NG. The results revealed no significant improvement $t=1.644$, $df (15)$, $p=0.060$. The mean post score ($M=93.50$, $SD=15.13$) was not significantly different from the

mean pre score ($M=89.43$, $SD=18.16$). As noted previously however, the use of standard scores in contrast to using raw scores may have masked the extent of the children's progress, as a raw score must increase even for a standard score to remain the same (see page 74). Given the increase in the mean score therefore this would suggest that progress is evident, as the mean standard score has increased although not at a significant level. Therefore, progress may have been more readily observed in the children's raw scores.

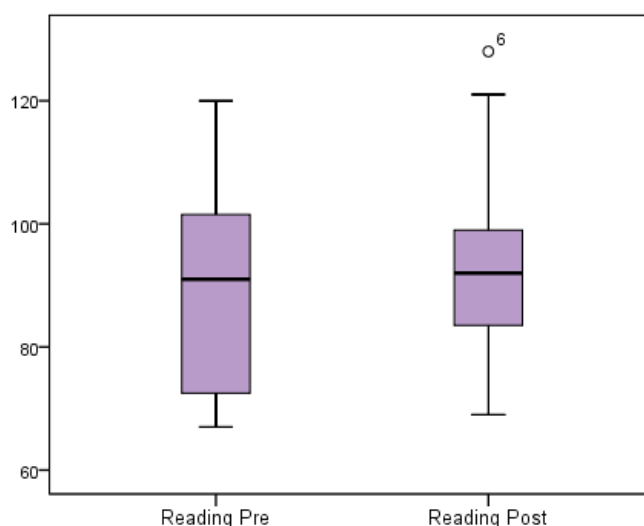


Figure 4.8: Boxplots of Word Reading Standard Scores

The graph displayed above shows the distribution in children's scores pre/post-intervention. Interestingly, although there is not a large difference in the median score children's scores are obviously more closely distributed post-intervention suggesting less variance, whilst the whiskers would also suggest the distribution of data is more symmetrical. Furthermore, the lower quartile score has notably increased suggesting a shift in the right direction. Although no significant improvement was found for children's word reading scores descriptive statistics suggest that an improvement was observed in the right direction, and the researcher notes that a larger sample may have yielded a significant result, particularly given that the calculated value 0.06 was very close to a significant value (0.05).

Secondly, a Paired Samples t-Test was undertaken to evaluate whether there was an improvement in children's spelling scores, as measured by the WRAT 4,

following access to the NG. The results show that the mean post score ($M=93.68$, $SD=16.01$) was significantly greater than the mean pre score ($M=87.43$, $SD=12.40$), $t = 2.231$, $df (15)$, $p=0.020$. The standardised effect size d . was 0.5 indicating a medium effect size. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was 0.27 to 12.22. Given the use of standard scores in this analysis the statistically significant difference would suggest that the children made more progress on this measure than would be expected (see page 74).

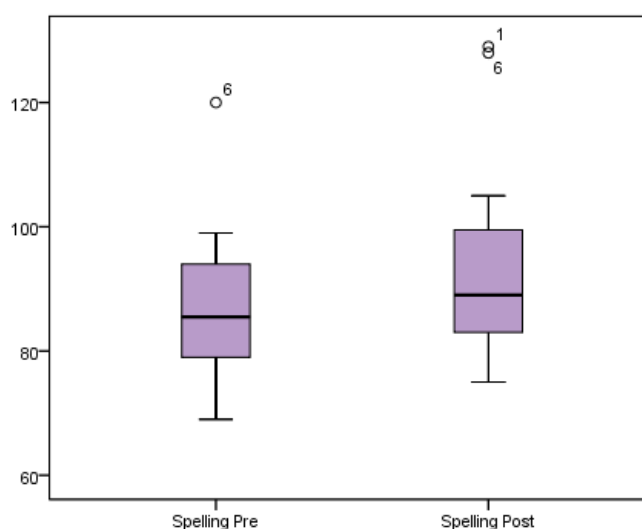


Figure 4.9: Boxplots of Spelling Standard Scores

The above graph displays the distribution of children's scores pre/post-intervention. Whilst the whiskers would suggest that the data is slightly negatively skewed pre-intervention, the distribution of data is more symmetrical post-intervention. The variance within the interquartile range appears similar pre/post-intervention. However, at post intervention the median is higher and the majority of scores within the interquartile range appear to fall above this suggesting a shift in the right direction. It is however important to note that outliers are evident which will have had some impact upon results.

National Curriculum Level Data

Whilst the WRAT 4 provided interval data the second literacy measure, NCLs, provided categorical data. Categorical data refers to data which falls into separate entities and the difference between groups is often qualitative rather

than quantitative (Field, 2009). The only statistical test suitable for use with categorical data is the Chi-Square Test (Field, 2009). Unfortunately, due to the small sample size the data failed to meet one of the test's main assumptions that expected frequencies should be greater than 5. In addition, the test is not suitable for a repeated measures design. Therefore, statistical analysis could not be undertaken on this variable and consequently it was decided to report observations based on the descriptive statistics.

It should be noted that NCLs increase in numerical order i.e. level 2 is higher than level 1, whilst in relation to the letters depicted each level is broken down into a, b, and c; where 'c' is the lower level and 'a' the higher. A proportion of the children in this sample were working below level 1 of the National Curriculum and therefore their progress was recorded using P scales. P scales are split into eight different levels where P1 is the lowest and P8 the highest. Level P8 then leads into NCL 1. For ease of analysis both P scales and NCLs were converted from letters to numbers. Because both formats had been used a continuous numerical scale was needed. Therefore, the P scales (1-8) and NCLs (1c-3a) were converted into a scale between 1 to 17 where P1=1 and 3a=17 (appendix 12). In this instance the researcher felt that progress would be best determined by considering how many children moved up a sub-level/level. Therefore, to demonstrate this, results are presented for children individually.

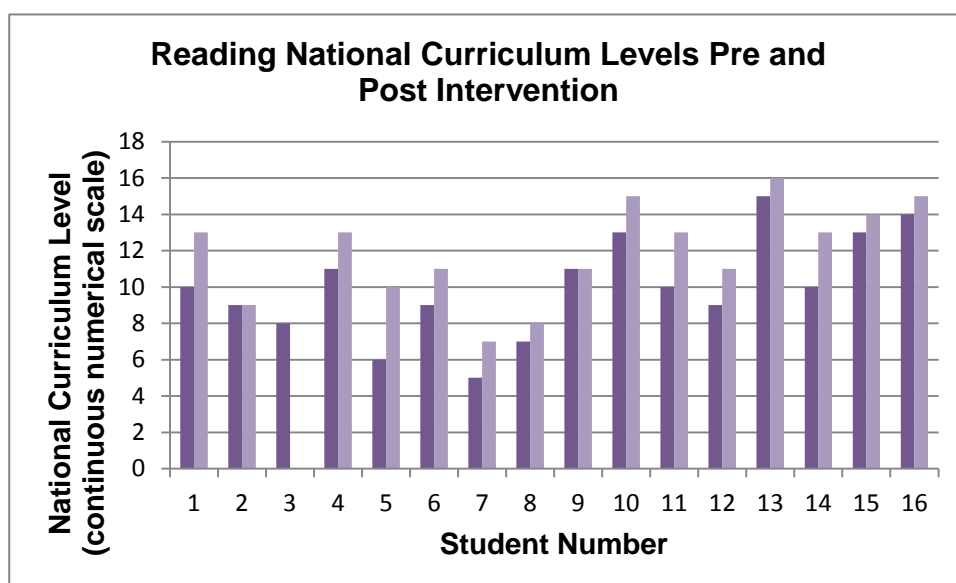


Figure 4.10: National Curriculum Reading Levels Pre/Post Intervention

The above graph reveals that 13 of the 16 participants demonstrated an improvement in their reading NCL following access to the NG. However, a causal relationship cannot be assumed. Of the remaining 3 participants, 2 displayed no change in level, whilst data for the final student was not available from the school. The degree of change ranged from one sub-level to one complete level of progress.

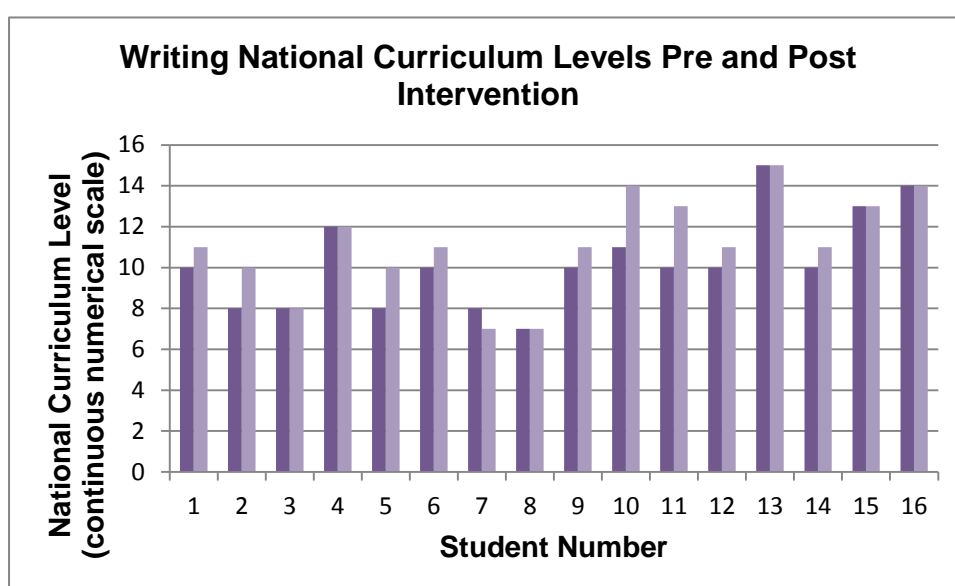


Figure 4.11: National Curriculum Writing Levels Pre/Post Intervention

In relation to writing NCLs results showed that of the 16 participants 9 demonstrated improvement following access to the NG. However, a causal relationship cannot be assumed. Of the remaining 7 participants 6 displayed no change in level whilst the final participant demonstrated regression. The degree of change ranged from one sub-level to one complete level between participants.

It is important to note once again when considering these outcomes the age range of participants and the potential impact of this upon results, however, given that children are expected to make two sub-levels of progress within an academic year, regardless of their age, the effect in this instance should be minimised, as assessment criteria will have accounted for this. It is possible though, that those students for whom no progress is evident may reflect the older contingent within the cohort, as achieving attainment is likely to become harder in line with the children's developmental skills.

Overview

The results obtained from measures of children's literacy skills also present a mixed picture with both significant (spelling) and non-significant (word reading) findings. However, descriptive statistics for all sub-tests of the WRAT4 indicate a positive change across the quantitative sample, findings which are supported in part by the NCL data obtained which indicates that over half of the sample demonstrated an improvement in reading and writing following access to the NG. Therefore, the results suggest that measures of children's literacy skills show some improvement following NG access.

4.2.3 Summary of Quantitative Findings

The quantitative results present a range of significant and non-significant findings. However, in general they suggested that measures of children's language and literacy scores improved post-intervention, and whilst the difference was not always significant scores showed an increase in the right direction. It is important however that these findings are interpreted with caution and at best they may be seen to represent a trend in the data which hints towards a positive impact. This caution is necessary due to the small sample size, the variance within the group, the presence of outliers and the relatively

high standard deviations. Whilst findings are important in acknowledging the potential impact of NGs upon language and literacy development, and at the very least suggesting that progress remains evident for children accessing a more holistic curriculum, further research will be necessary to validate any conclusions drawn.

4.3 Findings from the Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was obtained through interviews in an effort to consider the children's views and acknowledge their experiences of NGs. As identified previously (section 3.4.1) the qualitative data followed on from the quantitative data seeking to both provide further support for the quantitative findings and to support an understanding of the processes which may have influenced the NG outcomes. In this way the qualitative data was seen to provide more information and therefore it was assigned greater weighting within the research. Furthermore, it was anticipated that such data would be beneficial in optimising the effects of the intervention.

Pseudonym	School	Age
Jessica	1	07:04
Tom	1	05:09
Jack	1	06:03
Harry	1	07:02
Daniel	2	06:09
Ben	2	06:10
Ella	2	09:01
Lucy	2	07:10

Table 4.7: Details of the Children Participating in the Individual Interviews (NB. All names provided are pseudonyms).

A review of the research literature (see section 2.8) suggested that accessing children's views is important in enabling them to participate in decisions concerning their education (Todd, 2003b). However, inherent difficulties in this process such as providing an appropriate vehicle for children to express their opinions (Gersch, 1996) were acknowledged. Consequently, it is important to note the young age of these participants, particularly as it has been recognised when using semi-structured interviews that children may fail to respond if they don't know how to reply (Armstrong, 1995). However, the use of creative techniques to encourage responses, such as scaling (Todd, 2003b) and cue cards (Lewis, 2002), have been demonstrated to provide more detailed responses. Therefore, to support the children's ability to communicate some of these techniques were included during the interviews and the researcher's own experiences and professional skills in eliciting views and responses from young children were drawn upon.

A combined inductive and deductive TA was used to explore the dataset and the process adopted followed Braun and Clark's (2006; 2013) six-step model (see section 3.6.3). The phases involved in this process are described below and data examples are included to clarify the six stages of the analysis:

Phase 1: The process began through transcription and continual re-reading of the data to achieve familiarisation and allow initial notes of interest. Transcripts of all the children's interviews are included on the disc attached to this thesis, whilst pencilled notes were made by the researcher on hard copies of the transcripts in relation to notes of interest. Examples of such notes included: 'children sad that NG will be stopped as they are transitioning back to mainstream class' and 'children recognising their achievements since being in NG'.

Phase 2: This was followed by the act of coding which enabled organisation of the data into meaningful groups. During this phase the researcher generated codes that were data driven and therefore dependent upon the data itself. These were produced to capture elements of the data that drew the researcher's attention. The researcher worked systematically through each section of the interviews but across the entire data set to ensure that all

meaningful units of data, as perceived by the researcher, could be recognised. The codes were identified by letters and documented using a codebook system. For example, the code 1ENG was generated in relation to children discussing positive comments about the NG, which indicated their enjoyment of the provision, and a data extract which was allocated this code was 'Because I love nurture'. In total 33 codes were documented for section one of children's interviews and 31 codes for section two. Both the researcher's codebook and an example of a coded transcript can be found in appendices 13 and 14 respectively.

Phase 3: The next step involved generating initial themes by reviewing the identified codes and subsequently organising these into main themes and subthemes. For example, 'strategies' was identified as a general theme within the second section of children's interviews. As the process evolved this was then refined to become 'supportive features', as the researcher felt that this theme could be broken down further to contain the subthemes 'techniques and resources', 'environment', and 'approaches to curriculum delivery'. A theme was devised through the researcher's judgement if it were deemed to have relevance to the research question. To assist the process visual representations in the form of initial thematic maps were employed, helping the researcher to recognise relationships between codes and themes and thereby providing a structure for the findings. The end result was an initial collection of themes and sub-themes with coded data extracts attached.

Phase 4: During phase four of the process the researcher reviewed the themes in relation to the coded extracts to confirm a coherent pattern. In addition, further refinements were made in the form of subthemes and subordinate subthemes, to accurately differentiate the data. For example, the theme 'teacher support' was collapsed into the theme 'supportive features' and became a subtheme. This was then further divided into the subordinate subthemes 'availability' and 'providing strategies'. For example, the data extract *'Interviewer: How's nurture helped you with your writing? Harry: Ehhhh....Ehhh....Mmmm...When I get stuck on a word I have to put my hand up and say, 'Miss' how do you spell ehhh...'* sat within the subordinate subtheme 'availability'. In contrast the extract *'and I think Miss XXXX has helped me a bit*

because now she's realised that I've got to slow down a bit and actually take the breaks' came under the subordinate subtheme 'providing strategies'. Following satisfaction that the extracts sat within the identified themes and subthemes, the thematic maps were then reviewed to confirm that they accurately portrayed the meanings reflected in the data set as a whole, relative to particular sections of the interviews. A peer reviewer was also approached to check the coding of the data and its thematic arrangement; and it was concluded that the researcher's organisation of the data depicted a valid analysis. At the end of this stage two overarching themes were identified relative to section 1 of the interviews and RQ3, whilst section 2 produced five key themes in relation to RQ4. The majority of these themes had additional subthemes and subordinate subthemes. The thematic maps constructed for each interview section can be found in their entirety in appendices 15 and 16.

Phase 5: Stage 5 of the process required that themes were defined and named (Braun and Clarke, 2006), with data extracts used to evidence why the data was organised in that way and consideration afforded to what was of interest about the theme and why. An example is the subordinate subtheme 'sad that it's ending', for which the collated data extracts can be found in appendix 17. These extracts were seen to represent the children's view that they had enjoyed accessing the NG and that they would be sad to be leaving this. This was of interest because it added a further dimension to the children's feelings towards the provision and suggested an important point to note when preparing children for their transition back to their mainstream class. To address phase 5 of the process the following sections now consider the thematic analysis of each interview section; presenting the overarching themes and definitions, with consideration for further subthemes and subordinate subthemes.

The final stage of the process (phase 6) is presented in chapter 5 when the data is discussed in relation to the RQs and the literature review, thus providing a wider picture of the findings.

4.3.1 Children's Views About Attending the Nurture Group

The analysis of qualitative data with regards to understanding children's views about attending the NGs provided two overarching themes: 'within child factors'

and 'external factors'. From these two main themes four subthemes were identified and several subordinate subthemes. The main themes and subthemes which represent the children's views about attending the NG can be viewed in figure 4.12. A complete thematic map for section one of children's interviews can be found in appendix 15.

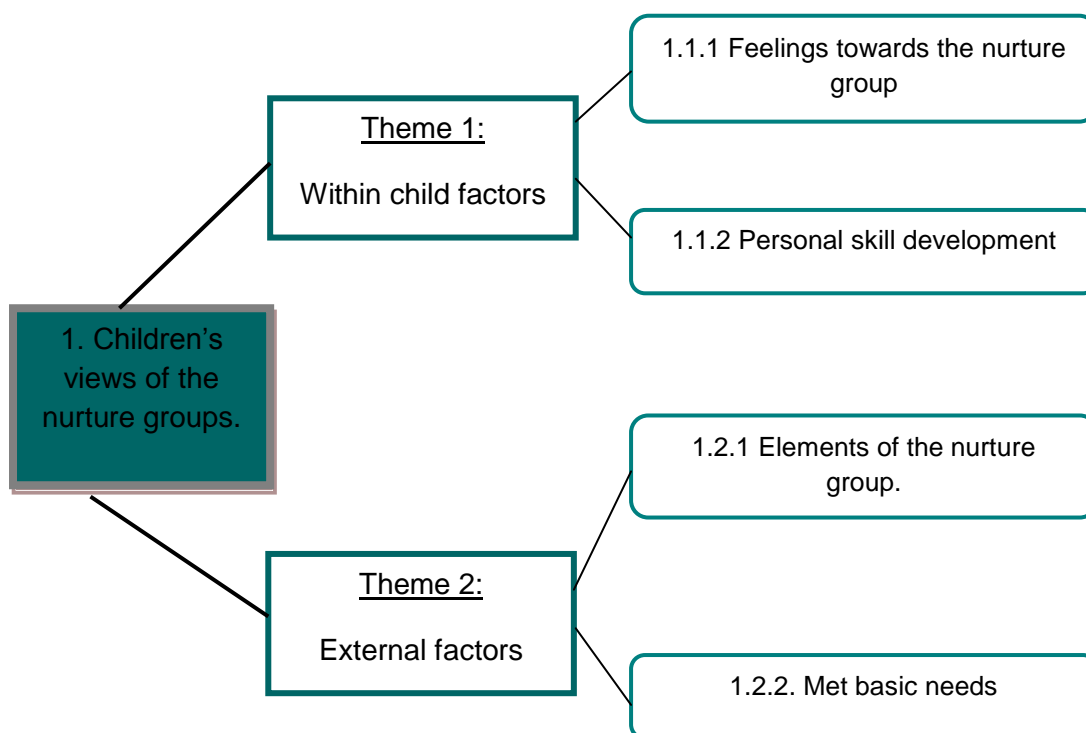


Figure 4.12: A Thematic Map of the Main Themes and Sub-Themes Identified from Children's Views about Attending the Nurture Groups.

These themes are now considered in greater detail through discussion and recognition of their associated subthemes.

Theme One: Within Child Factors

The overarching theme, subtheme and subordinate themes are displayed in figure 4.13. This theme concerned factors related to the children personally which they discussed in relation to NGs.

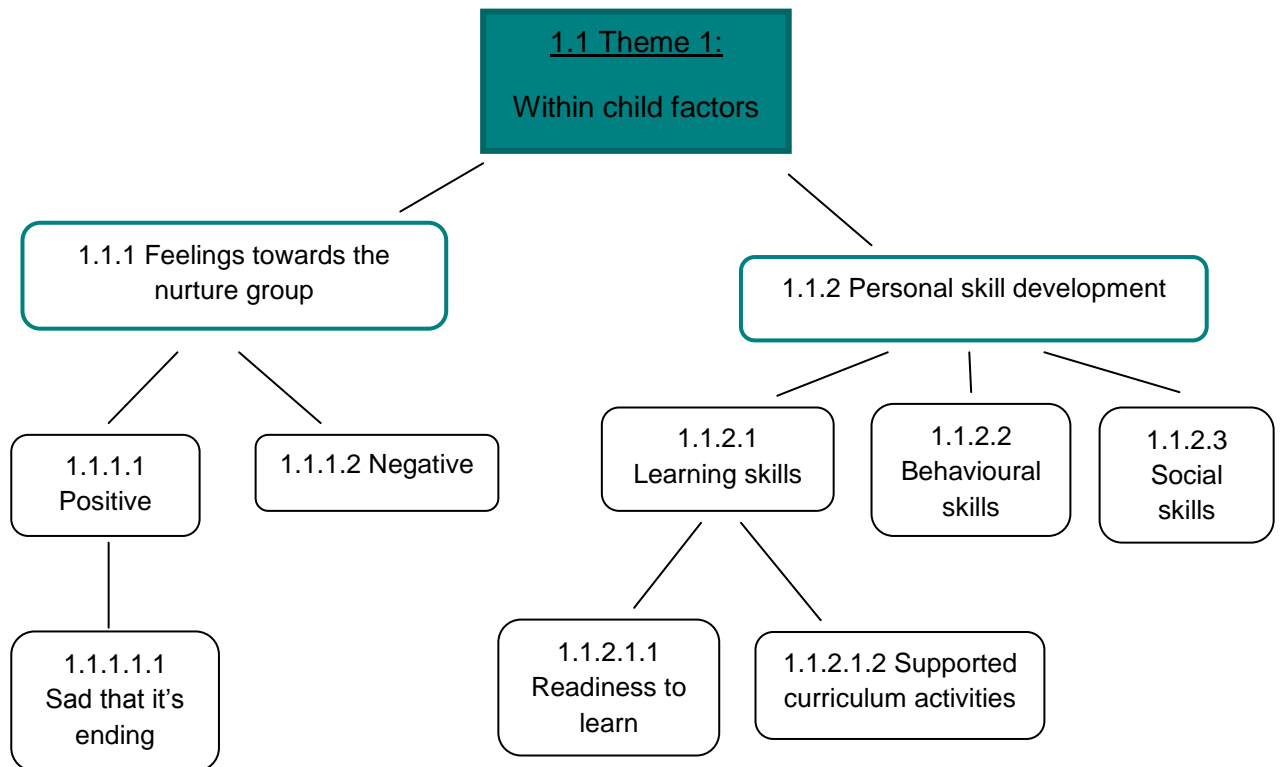


Figure 4.13: A Thematic Map of Theme One: Within Child Factors

Feelings Towards the Nurture Group (subtheme 1.1.1)

One of the within child factors which children discussed was their feelings in relation to NGs. Further analysis indicated that children either had positive or negative feelings towards the group.

Positive (subordinate subtheme 1.1.1.1)

Predominantly children were positive about their experience of the NG, indicating that they had enjoyed accessing this:

Ben: It's the best!

Lucy: I feel comfortable....I would put it on the smiley.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the nurture group?...Where would you put that on my scale?

Jack: 10, 10, 10, 10, 10.

Interviewer: Number 10, why did you choose that one?

Jack: I wish there was number 100.

Harry: Happy....Cos I like going to nurture group.

Tom: Err...because when I first started nurture was when I was five and I love it.

Interestingly, some children also identified that they had enjoyed the NG and that they would be sad to be leaving this, thus adding a further dimension to positive feelings about the group (1.1.1.1.1):

Jessica: Because I love nurture but I'm sad that it's going to be stopped.

Interviewer: So you're going back into your other class are you?

Lucy: Yeah after Christmas forever.

Interviewer: Are you looking forward to that?

Lucy: No I want to stay in my old class.

Tom: Yeah, but when it's gone past Christmas we're never going to nurture sadly.

This is an important point to note and one which should be considered when preparing children for transition back to their mainstream class, in order that this can be managed sensitively.

Negative (1.1.1.2)

However, there were also negative feelings expressed about the group by three children. In particular, one child made repeatedly negative comments about the NG, as will be evident throughout the presentation of the findings:

Daniel: Cos I hate nurture, completely hate it.

Daniel: It's boring, it's boring, it's boring!

Daniel: There's nothing fun, there's nothing fun in there.

It is important to note however that this child was having a difficult day when interviewed and had been in trouble in the NG which may have impacted upon

his responses, an important issue to highlight when carrying out interviews, particularly with children.

None of the other children seemed to share this child's dislike of the group. However, two of the children identified that they didn't like it when negative/unwanted behaviour occurred in the NG.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you don't like about nurture?

Harry: Ehh. People making the wrong choices.....it's quite hard when people make funny faces and you need to laugh.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you don't like about the nurture group?

What don't you like about the nurture?

Jessica: When everyone gets told off and when most people go down to the rain cloud. And then they go on to the thunder lightening.

The extracts presented here suggest that for the most part, children view the NG fondly and may not even wish to leave the group when the time is right, although they may continue to find some aspects of the group difficult. Interestingly, one child recognised that his enjoyment of the NG had grown over time.

Interviewer: Have you always enjoyed nurture?

Ben: Well when I started nurture I didn't really like it that much.

Interviewer: Why was that?

Ben: I just didn't I don't know why.

Interviewer: And when did you change your mind?

Ben: About few months ago.

This may suggest that it can take time for certain children to settle in the provision, perhaps due to the development of attachments within the group, and is a point to bear in mind when establishing new groups as it will likely affect some children's presenting behaviour and engagement.

Personal Skill Development (subtheme 1.1.2)

The other within child factor which children discussed in relation to NGs was the impact that the intervention had made upon the development of their personal skills. Further analysis indicated that this subtheme could be further broken down into the development of learning, behavioural, and social skills.

Learning Skills (subordinate subtheme 1.1.2.1)

Most commonly within this subtheme, children recognised and commented upon the impact of NGs upon their learning skills, and still further analysis suggested that they either noted a difference in their readiness to learn or felt more supported in curriculum activities.

For example, in relation to their readiness to learn children noticed a difference in their concentration, effort and listening:

Interviewer: Okay, do you think it's made a difference to your learning?

Lucy: Yes, cos I'm concentrating more.

Jessica: and then em I think I have been working much harder, they've been, they've been basically, they've been- that now I'm in the highest maths group because I've been working so hard.

Interviewer: Okay, anything else that you think nurture's helped you with?

Harry: Ehh...Mmmm...Ehhh...Listening more.

These are important skills which will enable the children to be more successful within the classroom environment and in accessing their education, and their responses imply that this is indeed the case.

As noted previously children also felt that the NG had encouraged their learning skills by supporting curriculum activities:

Interviewer: Has it helped you with anything?

Harry: My reading.

Interviewer: Your reading? How has it helped you with your reading?

Harry: Cos we have easy books and we have these like cards what have got the class but everyone of us has got a different card.

Interviewer: What do the cards do?

Harry: They like, when you've finished a book then you like write it down, so you remember what you've been reading.

However, in this instance they often struggled to identify exactly how it had helped, rather they had just noticed a change:

Ben: It's made things easier, I can't exactly tell you how.

Interviewer: Writing. Fantastic. Can you think of how it's helped you to write?

Jack: Nope

Despite this difficulty in placing what it was that changed relative to curriculum activities this information is important as it suggests that children felt they had somehow been supported in accessing the curriculum.

This subtheme helps to suggest that NGs can have academic as well as social/emotional benefits. Furthermore, and interestingly, observed outcomes have related to the improvement of both language and literacy skills.

Behavioural Skills (subordinate subtheme 1.1.2.2)

Children also perceived that the NG had impacted upon their behavioural skills and this was true for half of the pupils interviewed.

Ben: Mmm hmm I used to be really bad in my other class but I'm really good now.

Lucy: in my old class I used to be very noisy and crying.

Interviewer: Mmm hmm

Lucy: So if someone said horrible things to me I would burst into tears.

Interviewer: And what, what happens in the new class, in nurture?

Lucy: If you're in tears you can go out for a walk or go to the quiet area.

Jessica: Stops you making the wrong choices.

Extracts suggest that NGs aimed to support the development of good behaviour and have been successful in; changing children's perceptions of their behaviour, enabling them to achieve more positive behaviour, and providing them with strategies to manage their behaviour.

Social Skills (subordinate subtheme 1.1.2.3)

Finally, two children acknowledged a change in their social skills as a result of access to the NG.

Interviewer: And has it helped you with anything, can you think of something the nurture group's helped you with?

Tom: Playing with some of my friends. I can tell you what some of their name is (lists all the children in the group).

Interviewer: Where would you put on the scale if I asked whether the nurture group has made a difference in school?

Ella: I'd put it on the happy face.

Interviewer: And why would you choose that one? How has it made a difference?

Ella: It made me not shy.

Interviewer: Do you know how it helped?

Ella: No.

Interestingly, again although it was difficult for one child to pinpoint what had supported the change they were clear on the impact.

Perhaps importantly, where change wasn't apparent, children were also able to recognise and acknowledge this:

Lucy: Still the same with XXXX when we play together she suddenly gets bored of me playing with her.....So we don't play with each other then we do play with each other.

This suggests that statements pertaining to a change are genuine, even if the child is unable to acknowledge the specific means by which the NG was of support.

The extracts presented within this subtheme are important as they help to acknowledge the children's perceived impact of the NG. Interestingly, the majority of the children recognised that the intervention had supported them with the development of some skill, although the particular skill impacted varied in relation to the individual child. These skills included accessing their learning, presenting with better behaviour, and establishing friendships.

Theme Two: External Factors

The overarching theme, subthemes, and subordinate subthemes can be seen in figure 4.14 This theme relates to comments made by the children about the NG which were not related to them personally but which were labelled as 'external factors'.

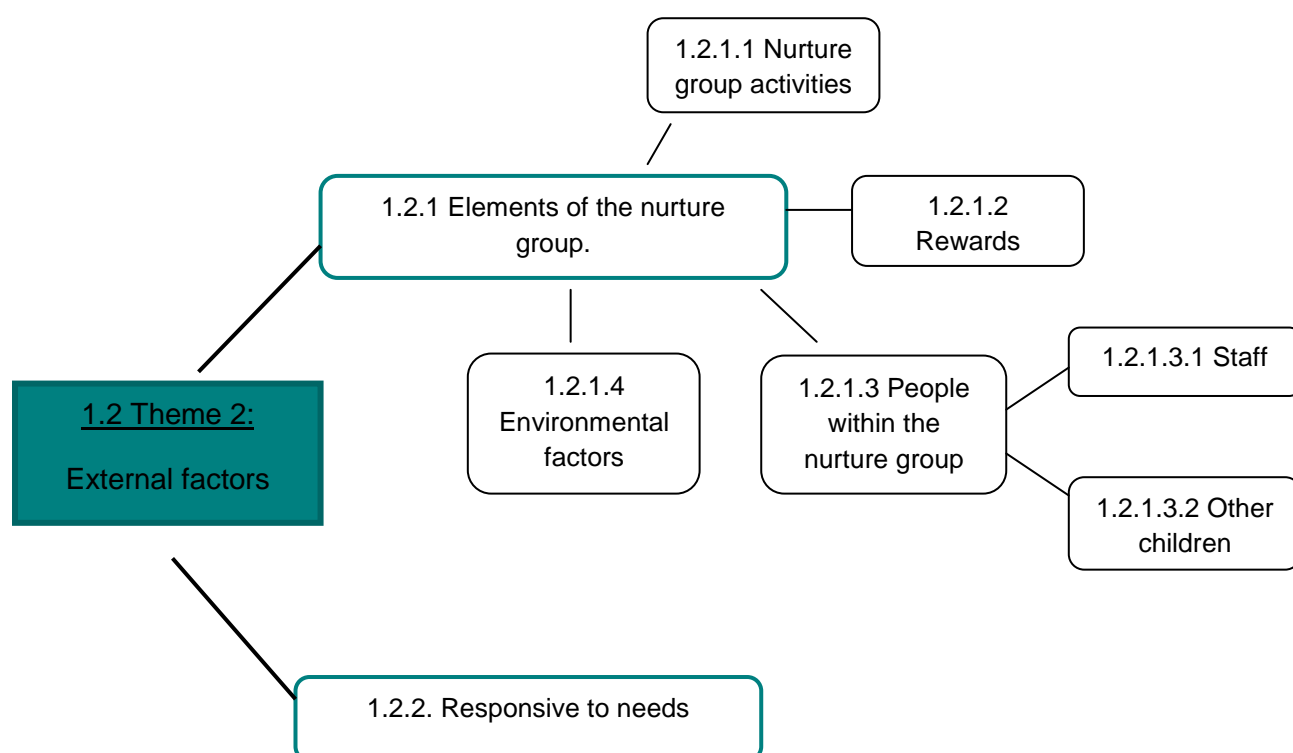


Figure 4.14: A Thematic Map of Theme two: External Factors

Elements of the Nurture Group (subtheme 1.2.1)

When engaging in discussion about the NG, the children regularly commented on specific elements of the provision. Further analysis suggested that these elements related either to activities that they accessed, rewards that they received, people within the NG, and environmental factors relevant to the provision. These shall now be considered in turn to gain a greater understanding of the children's perspectives relevant to features of the provision.

Nurture Group Activities (subordinate subtheme 1.2.1.1)

The element of NGs which children most commonly commented upon was the activities which were carried out in the group. Such responses predominantly arose from questions about what the children had liked about the NG and what they would tell other people about the group. Interestingly, when expressing their views on activities pupils mainly spoke about snack time and time spent playing:

Lucy: I like playing, I like my snack.

Interviewer: You really like nurture? Yeah?

Jack: Yep.

Interviewer: Why did you choose that number then?...

Jack: Because of snack time and play a lot.

Interviewer: What do you like about it?

Tom: Playing and snack time. Wish I could have snack time 100.

Interviewer: Why would you tell them that it's fun?

Ben: Because it is. When you play it's fun.

Harry: Having snack; playtime; getting XXXX biscuit day and making cake.

This would suggest that these were important elements of the provision for the children and those which they valued/enjoyed. Perhaps they were also a focus as they are different to the activity of a normal mainstream class. Interestingly, even the older children commented that they had enjoyed playing, suggesting

that this is not necessarily something which ceases with progression through primary school.

The children also spoke about more general activities:

Jessica: They let you do stuff outside, they let you create, they let you play round.....whatever they have out they let you go on it.

Tom: They like built a new tent and we can go in it.

Lucy: And I like puppets.

As well as also making reference to work activities which they had enjoyed:

Interviewer: What did you do that was fun?

Ella: Like we did maths and I like maths.

Jessica: And we get to do even-Miss gives us work. Like she can help us with it and she gives us answers and then we can colour bits in and stuff like that.

Ben: Sometimes doing work.

Interviewer: Sometimes doing work is fun as well.

Ben: Yep.

Jack: Reading, reading! I forgot that!

Interviewer: Reading you like. What do you like about reading in nurture?

Jack: To the teachers...Cos I got 20, I read 21 out of 30 and on 30 I get to take a book home...and keep it.

One child even suggested that she may not tell others about the group and she may lie as she did not want them to be upset that they couldn't go.

Lucy: I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I would tell them a little bit but I wouldn't make them upset cos we have better stuff than them....I would say it's fun, we do the same stuff we don't have any playtime, we don't have any reward charts.

The children's comments seem to reflect their enjoyment of the provision and it is of interest that whilst they have enjoyed snack, playing and the variety of activities available to them, they have also enjoyed accessing work related activities.

Rewards (subordinate subtheme 1.2.1.2)

Receiving rewards was another element which the majority of the children commented upon and a feature of the provision which they appeared to have appreciated. The children seemed to have enjoyed accessing reward time that they had earned during the day:

Lucy: And I like it cos you get snack and reward time.

Ella: You get reward time sometimes.

Interviewer: Well what things do you do in there that you enjoy?

Ben: Reward time, play, and make stuff.

They were also enthusiastic in relation to specific rewards that they received:

Harry: Cos I like going to nurture group and you get XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX.

Interviewer: And what do you get those for?

Harry: Listening, remembering, cleaning my stuff away and well behaved.

Tom: And you can win XXXX and get to take him home.

Interviewer: And what do you win XXXX for?

Tom: Err that's if you don't get your name on the board and be good in nurture and do your best behaviour in the mornings.

Interviewer: What would you tell other people about the nurture group, so someone who didn't know anything about the nurture group?

Jessica: It's great fun...they make you get prizes out of the tin.

Again, these comments often arose either when asking the children what they liked about NGs or what they would tell someone else about the provision. The

rewards appear to have encouraged children to strive towards good behaviour, as evident from the extracts above, and to be hard working:

Interviewer: And what do you get your stickers for?

Jessica: Working hard and doing it, working together.

It is a feature of the NGs which they seem to have valued and respected and one which has provided motivation and a sense of success.

People within the Nurture Group (subordinate subtheme 1.2.1.3)

The children also spoke about their experiences of other people within the provision and further analysis indicated that comments referred to both the staff members and other children. Interestingly, they made both positive and negative comments.

With regards to teachers, comments were predominantly positive, and indicated that they had enjoyed the support they had received from staff and perhaps the slightly different approach of these staff members to that observed within the mainstream classroom:

Jessica: And the teachers are amazing.

Interviewer: Why are the teachers amazing?

Jessica: Cos they help you with stuff and they let you do stuff that other teacher's normally don't.

Lucy: And I have a nice teacher and her name's miss XXXX.

Ella: And lots of teachers to help you with, mmm there's lots of teachers around.

The increased staffing ratio was acknowledged by a couple of children, and interestingly one child appeared to appreciate this as it helped to contain situations, as opposed to providing him with greater access to support:

Harry: It's much better than having one teacher.

Interviewer: Why's that?

Harry: ...If someone's being naughty one teacher can't just run over there and get them. So two teachers they can like, like XXXX, he tries to get out. So two teachers have to get him.

However, there was also recognition that NG staff could be like other staff at times too:

Lucy: The teachers are still a little bit shouty like normal.

And the child experiencing a negative day in NG did not feel that the staff were supporting him.

Daniel: There isn't any generous people in there, rubbish and everything.

In relation to comments regarding other children, again there were positive comments which related to the establishment of friendships:

Lucy: I like playing with friends and making new friends.... I just like meeting new people there.

Ella: Err cos I played with other people, I had loads of fun in there, ermm can't think of anything.

However, the children also recognised that they found some relationships difficult within the group:

Ben: It's (unclear) people in there are kind except from a few.

Interviewer: So there's a few people that you still find a bit tricky?

Ben: Probably maybe one.

Harry: Ehh, cos everyone in the nurture group's nice to me, but XXXX, he's quite rude, cos when he gets bad tempered he, like, storms out the door.

This latter factor is likely to be important to consider in relation to group composition, as it may create difficulties for some children in settling within the

group and prevent success in the maintenance of positive behaviour, at least initially when the child's strategies for managing their behaviour are few.

Environmental Factors (subordinate subtheme 1.2.1.4)

The final element which children commented on during discussion related to the NG environment. Interestingly, whilst only two children made reference to this element of the provision, these comments were positive and appeared to reflect the children's preference for the quieter and smaller group environment which the NG provided in contrast to the mainstream classroom:

Lucy: Well there's a small class and I definitely prefer that.

Interviewer: Why do you prefer that?

Lucy: Because I don't like lots of noise.

Harry: Eh hh. It's much more quiet there cos there's less people.

Interviewer: And why do you like it being quiet?

Harry: Cos in my class it's very noisy, it's normally too much and in nurture group there's normally 6 or 7.

One child also recognised that the NG environment was supportive in helping her to calm down following an upset.

Lucy: If you're in tears you can go out for a walk or go to a quiet area.

This may suggest that the NG allowed for the provision of more personal space when this was at times necessary, a factor which can be considered essential given the often more volatile nature of these children.

Thus for some, an environment which offers the opportunity for retreat, and is not so overwhelming as the mainstream classroom, is an element of the NG which they hold valuable.

The extracts presented within this subtheme have been illuminative in relation to children's views about key elements of the NGs. Findings have included: activities which they enjoy; the value placed upon rewards; the importance of

group composition and staff support; and the support offered from a smaller group environment.

Responsive to Needs (subtheme 1.2.2)

The final subtheme for the main theme, 'external factors' relates to the children's recognition that the NG had provided for some of their most basic needs. Whilst only two children commented on this aspect of the provision, their responses were felt to be important as they relate to factors which lay the foundations for healthy development and learning. More specifically children commented on feeling safe within the group and not being hungry:

Tom: You get to have snack time but in class you don't and my tummy starts to rumble in class.

Interviewer: Has the nurture group helped you with anything? What's it helped you with?

Jessica: Working harder and it's safe.

By addressing such factors children can be more ready for school experiences, particularly learning, as they are less distracted by other needs. Furthermore, the comment from student one could be seen to reflect the attachment principles of the approach whereby allowing children to feel secure consequently allows for more confident exploration and therefore learning.

4.3.2 Children's Views about Whether the Nurture Group helped their Language and Literacy Skills

Thematic analysis of the data from the second section of children's interviews was undertaken to determine the children's views about whether the NGs helped their language and literacy skills. This produced five overarching themes. From these five main themes, 12 subthemes were identified and four subordinate subthemes. The main themes generated can be seen in figure 4.15. A complete thematic map for section two of the children's interviews can be found in appendix 16.

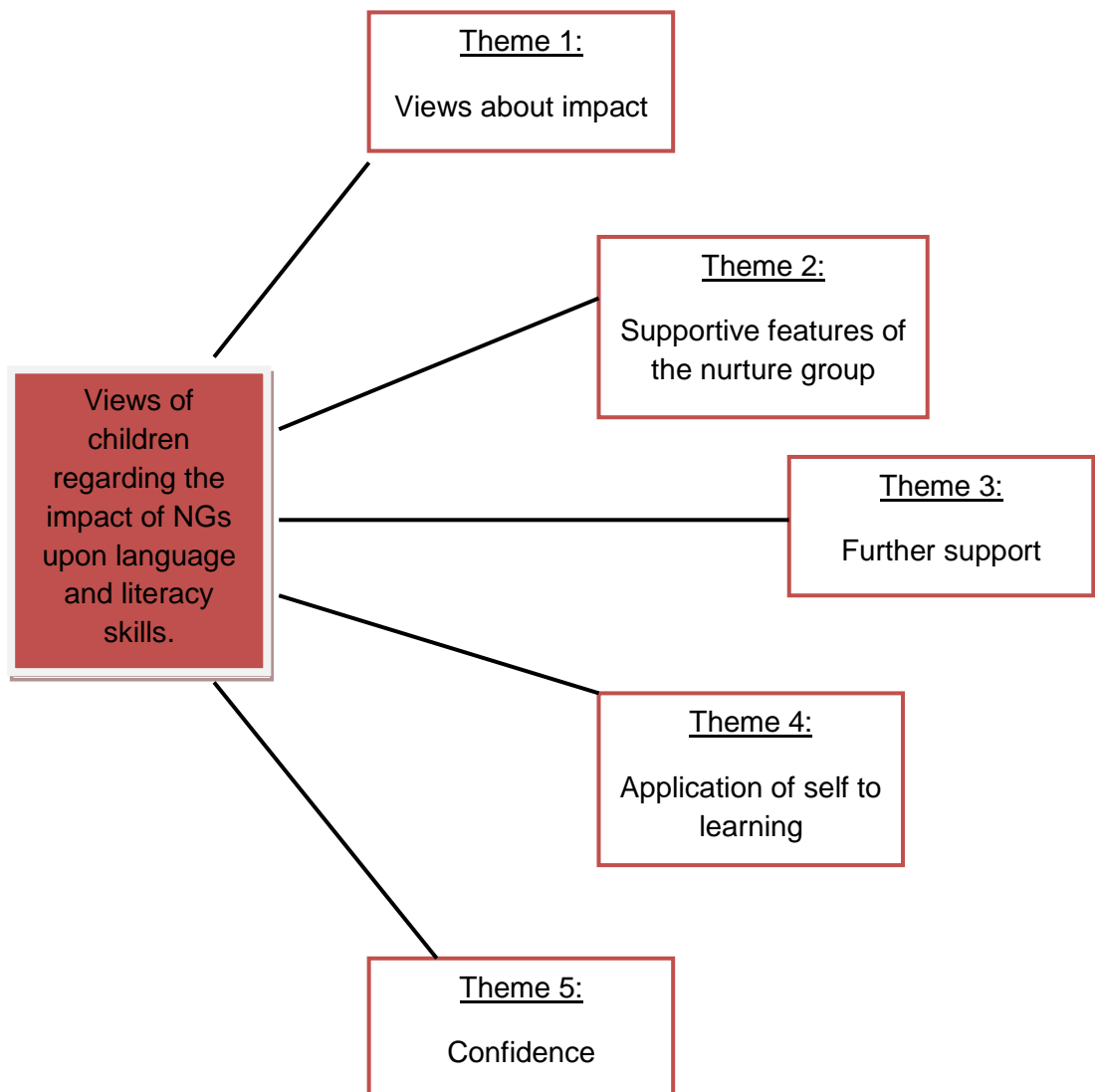


Figure 4.15: A Thematic Map of the Overarching Themes Regarding Children's Views about Whether the Nurture Group helped their Language and Literacy Skills.

These themes are now considered further by discussing them and their associated subthemes. When approaching children to discuss the impact of NGs upon language and literacy skills, four key skills were considered: reading writing, listening and talking to others.

Theme One: Views about Impact

The overarching theme and subthemes for 'views about impact' are displayed in figure 4.16. This theme concerned the children's views as to whether or not the NG had made an impact upon their language and literacy skills.

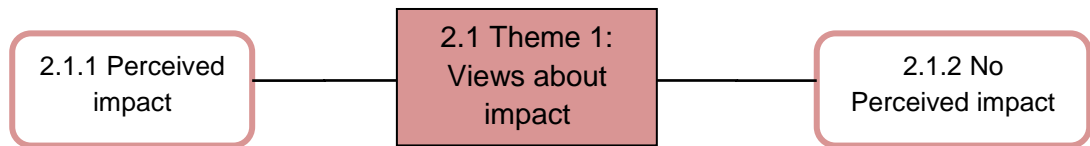


Figure 4.16: A Thematic Map of Theme One: Views about Impact

Perceived Impact (subtheme 2.1.1)

The majority of children were clear that the NG had made a difference, particularly in relation to reading and writing, and an understanding of this impact was further supported through the use of scaling. As mentioned previously (section 3.6.2 & section 4.3) the use of scaling was employed to support children's answers. When initially presented with a question children were asked to rate their response on a scale (1-10) to prompt an initial response and initial thoughts, before probe questions were employed to obtain further information. Children's responses relative to the impact of NGs upon reading and writing were more often placed at the upper end of the scale indicating that they perceived a big impact. For example, one of the children was clear about the impact upon their reading:

Interviewer: What about if I asked you whether nurture's made a difference to your reading?

Tom: Yep.

Interviewer: It has, where would you put that on my scale?

Tom: One hundred but there's only ten.

A view supported by another child when questioned:

Interviewer: Umm do you think, in fact I would like you to tell Mr Ben here, whether umm XXXX's class has made a difference to your reading?

Ben: Yeah quite a lot.

Interviewer: Quite a lot?

Ben: Mmm Hmmm

Interviewer: And where would you put that on my scale? What number?

Ben: Ten.

A similar response was also noted when asking children about any impact upon their writing:

Interviewer: So has the new class helped you with your writing?

Harry: Yes

Interviewer: Yes. Where would you put that on my scale?

Harry: Mmmmmm

Interviewer: Number?

Harry: Ten

However there was also evidence of less clear cut impact:

Interviewer: So where would you put that on my scale, whether you think the nurture group has made a difference to your writing?

Lucy: I would put it on number seven.

Interviewer: Number seven and why did you choose that one?

Lucy: Because I'm half way between not sure and ten because I'm not really sure.

Some of the children also perceived the nurture group had made a difference to their listening and their ability to talk to others:

Interviewer: So where on my scale would you put it if I asked you whether the nurture group had made a difference to your good listening?

Ella: Number nine.

Interviewer: Why did you choose that one?

Ella: Umm.....I was listening to others more.

Interviewer: I've also talked to you before about talking to other children or adults haven't I and whether you found that easy or difficult, do you remember?

Ella: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, and do you think being in nurture class helped you with that?

Ella: Umm yeah it did help me a lot. Last time I was shy to talk to others.

Interestingly, one child even recognised the impact it had had upon a peer:

Lucy: Yes, especially helped my friend XXXX cos she, when we first came into nurture, when she did she didn't speak at all.

Interviewer: And is she speaking now?

Lucy: Yeah, she's speaking much more.

Although, particularly in relation to the ability to talk to others, the perceived impact was less extreme for some:

Jack: Number 5, well it's in between 5 or 6.

Interviewer: Okay why did you choose that one?

Jack: I'm not sure

Interviewer: Fantastic but has it helped you do you think?

Lucy: Yeah kind of.

Interviewer: Where would you put that on my scale?

Lucy: Four

No Perceived Impact (subtheme 2.1.2)

The children were also forthcoming if they did not perceive the NG to have made a difference. For example, Daniel when asked whether the NG had made a difference to or helped his reading said:

Daniel: No

Interviewer: No?

Daniel: Nothing works.

Whilst it is known that he was having a difficult day, his response also suggests a lack of confidence in his own ability and a certain defensiveness in relation to

the difficulties he may encounter. In contrast, Jack suggested he did not need help from the NG:

Interviewer: Has the nurture group helped you with your writing?

Jack: No

Interviewer: Ooh

Jack: (Laughs) I can write anyway

Although he later changed his mind stating that he had chosen the wrong option and that the NG had helped him. It was unclear whether this change in response was due to the possibility of demand characteristics or whether clarification of the question through further discussion had supported his understanding and his memory of events thereby leading to a revised response. Another child, who when interviewed had returned to their mainstream class, felt that their literacy skills had improved more after returning to their class:

Ella: Last time in nurture group I didn't do target writing , now I do loads of writing cos I do target writing and I do loads and loads of writing now.

This may suggest that this child missed the more formal aspects of the curriculum in the NG, or certainly felt that these aspects made a difference to their reading and writing.

Interestingly, only Daniel felt the intervention hadn't supported his listening skills. In contrast three children identified no impact upon their ability to talk to others, whilst two were unclear of the impact in this domain.

Daniel even recognised a negative impact upon his skills in social interactions due to his relationships within the group:

Daniel: No! It's all boring and it gives me worse words (unclear)....Cos there's so many people in there what I don't like and then they swear at me and it gives me ideas.

Whilst the majority of responses indicated that children had perceived an impact in all four areas there were nevertheless also clear examples of when this was not the case, although these do remain the minority. Furthermore, individual children felt supported in different ways and whilst they may have perceived change in one area they may not have done so in another, views which may contrast with another child's experience.

Theme Two: Supportive Features of the Nurture Group

The main themes regarding pupil's perceptions of elements of the NG which they felt had supported their language and literacy skills can be seen in figure 4.17. Most commonly the children spoke about methods used to deliver curriculum activities (2.2.2) and strategies and resources (2.2.3).

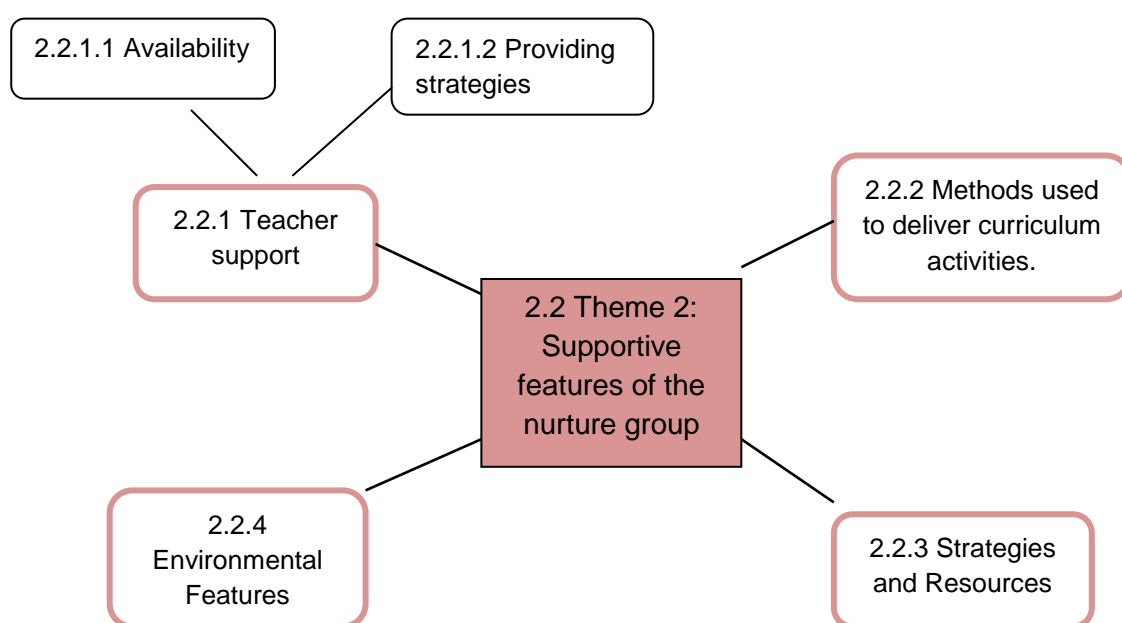


Figure 4.17: A Thematic Map of Theme Two: Supportive Features of the Nurture Group

Teacher Support (subtheme 2.2.1)

The children's responses implied that for some, support from the NG staff had been helpful in improving both their language and literacy skills. Further analysis indicated that the children spoke of such support either in relation to the availability of the staff or in relation to the strategies/support that the staff provided the students with.

For example, when discussing how the NG had helped certain skills one student acknowledged that having access to staff had been a beneficial feature in supporting his listening skills.

Tom: Err because in class, because miss XXXX helped me a bit.

Other students supported this perception when discussing their reading and writing.

Interviewer: How's nurture helped you with your writing?

Harry: Ehhh, ehhh....Mmmm..When I get stuck on a word I have to put my hand up and say, 'Miss' how do you spell ehhh...

Interviewer: What- how has the nurture group helped you with your reading?

Jack: When I'm stuck on words. I've never got stuck on a word.

Interviewer: So when you're stuck on words it helps, and how has it helped you when you're stuck on words at nurture, what do you do?

Jack: Ask the teacher, mmmm

Interestingly, one student displayed a negative slant towards teacher support and felt that they now received more of this having returned to the mainstream class.

Interviewer: What do you think has helped you with your writing, has anything helped you?

Ella: Umm in my new class had loads of teachers helping me.

The researcher believes such a response may potentially reflect this child's perception that her needs were being overlooked due to the more challenging behaviour of other members within the group.

As previously mentioned some of the children also believed they benefitted from staff providing them with strategies/support. In relation to the improvement of

language skills such support appeared to relate to assisting the children's understanding and was of a more social nature:

Interviewer: How has it helped you talk to other people?

Jessica: Say if I was talking badly to the teachers, they would take us out and just explain why we shouldn't do it and stuff like that.

However, when linked to literacy skills, teacher support was often tied to the provision of more specific techniques for the children to use. For example when discussing reading one child commented:

Jessica: And I think Miss XXXX has helped me a bit because now she's realised that I've got to slow down a bit and actually take the breaks...I've got to take a deep breath...and she then had to put the card down and I followed where she was going across it.

Interestingly, whilst the views of five children have contributed to this theme, the majority of extracts in fact come from Jessica, which may therefore be suggestive of a certain dependency upon adults and hence her perception that teacher support is helpful. Nevertheless this theme highlights that some children benefit from support from NG staff in relation to their learning.

Methods Used to Deliver Curriculum Activities (subtheme 2.2.2)

This subtheme was the area that the children most commonly spoke of in relation to this particular theme, with six of the eight children contributing to this subtheme from across the age range. This may therefore suggest that the way curriculum activities are delivered is of great significance in supporting the development of children's skills.

Interestingly, children's comments predominantly referred to the development of language as opposed to literacy skills, suggesting that they had valued the work within NGs to specifically and explicitly support their language skills, and recognised this input.

Interviewer: Is there anything you did in nurture that you think might have helped you?

Ella: Err not really, I remember some of the bits we did like talking together.

Interviewer: Okay what did you talk about?

Ella: Like we got in a circle on our chairs and we talked about our day and how it's been.

Interviewer: How has it helped you talk to other children and adults?

Harry: Cos we like...normally we like switch round sometimes.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Harry: Swap places...we do ten minutes and then another ten minutes when we have our two play things or three. Then we have to stop.

Interviewer: So it's helped you because you have to play with different people?

Harry: MmmmHmm

Jessica: But now we're doing listening games every day and stuff like that.

Harry: Emm. Listening because we normally go round to see what's been happening in weekends or what's our favourite animal and the teacher chooses one of us to remember the other persons.

In relation to methods which children recognised had supported their literacy skills, there was some evidence that they had enjoyed a more creative approach to delivering this subject:

Interviewer: So ten why would you choose that? How has it made a difference with your reading, what've you been doing?

Tom: Cos going in the tent is fun.

Interviewer: So it's fun reading in the tent?

Tom: Yeah and you get to see the colours inside the tent to.

Interviewer: So nurture has helped you with your reading cos you can do it in the tent, is that right?

Tom: Yeah

Jessica: I've been writing much better because Mrs XXXX, she's been using, em she's been telling us, we've been doing finger work, it's like

cutting paper and twisting things to cut it and stuff like that and using our play dough as plasticine, rolling it round in our hands to give us finger exercises.

Providing motivating materials and a sense of personal ownership also seemed to have helped one child:

Jessica: Like Mrs XXXX put our names on the top of the pencil and then put things on it and then we was allowed to choose the colour and then we were allowed to write with it and stuff like that.

In addition, some children also appear to have benefitted from access to different reading materials:

Lucy: Well I've been reading free reader books now instead of stage books.

Interviewer: Ahh, well done.

Lucy: I'm more comfortable with that.

Interviewer: Why's that?

Lucy: Because I feel that I'm better at reading

Interviewer: So how has the nurture group helped you with your reading?

Jessica: Because they've got level five's in their group and they've made me start reading their books.

Therefore, in summary the data relative to this subtheme suggests that children benefit from explicit instruction and focused activities to support language skills, whilst enjoying a differentiated and creative approach to aid their developing literacy skills.

Strategies and Resources (2.2.3)

This subtheme was also one of the more prominent categories indicating that children felt the NG had been supportive in providing them with more tools at their disposal.

In relation to supporting language skills, strategies as opposed to the provision of specific resources were noted to be supportive by some of the children, and these often related to improving social skills:

Jessica: Cos they make you have good manners.

Interviewer: Ahh. So you practice! Okay and how has it helped you to understand?

Harry: Ehh. Cos I'm a good listener and I, every time when someone talks I look at them.

Interviewer: How has it helped...what do you do in nurture group that helps you talk to other people?...Do you practise anything?

Jack: Yep.

Interviewer: What do you practice?

Jack: Talking to each other.

Interviewer: Talking to each other, how do you do that?

Jack: By starting 'hello'.

These comments suggest that the NG staff have been supporting the children in their interactions with one another and encouraging them to generalise these skills to other social situations. This is perhaps more evident in the extract below:

Interviewer: How has it helped you understand in the classroom?

Jessica: Because it's telling me that...(mumbles)

Interviewer: I know it's telling you what?

Jessica: It's telling me like breaks and stuff like that. And you've got to let people play, and understand.

When discussing their literacy skills children also spoke of supportive strategies:

Ben: Uhh...it's uh helped me keep it in the lines.

Interviewer: You said that it had made quite a difference to your reading didn't you, so what do you think has changed?

Ben: Well my sounding out.

Interviewer: Your sounding out, have you been working on that?

Ben: Well yeah quite a lot.

However, they also made reference to the provision of supportive resources when discussing their writing:

Interviewer: So on my scale, where would you put it if I asked you has the nurture group helped you with your writing?

Jessica: Number 10.

Interviewer: And why would you choose that one?

Jessica: Because they have been using the grips and we have been practising with them.

Interviewer: ten again! Why did you choose that one?...How has it made a difference to your writing?

Tom:...Because umm it gives my hand some exercise and I put a thing on my pencil and it helps me with my writing.

Thus, the children's comments suggest that they benefit from learning specific strategies to use when engaged in social interactions and employing their language skills, whilst the use of both strategies and physical aids are of assistance in relation to literacy skills.

Environmental Features (2.2.4)

Harry also mentioned that the quieter environment of the NG had been supportive for him when reading:

Interviewer: Why did you say it had made a difference?

Harry: Cos ehheh...cos it's more quiet.

Interviewer: So has the nurture group helped you with your reading?

Number 9. Why did you choose that one?

Harry: Cos there's less people.

Whilst this feature was only explicitly voiced by one child it was felt important to include as a subtheme as it was obvious that he perceived it to have been a significant factor. This was reflected throughout the discussion with Harry as is evident from extracts within the different themes. Therefore, this would suggest that for him the quieter environment of the NG was all important in supporting his learning.

Theme Three: Further Support

The main theme 'further support' and its associated subthemes and subordinate subthemes are displayed in figure 4.18. This theme referred to factors which children identified would be of further support to them in developing their language and literacy skills. It is important to note that a couple of the subthemes identified share the same title as sub-themes within the main theme 'supportive features of the NG' for example, 'environmental features' and 'strategies and resources'. However, the researcher felt it was important to keep these data extracts within different main themes as whilst some extracts referred to beneficial elements and therefore potentially influential processes of NGs, other extracts referred to elements which had not been part of the provision but which may be useful to consider when determining how to improve NGs.

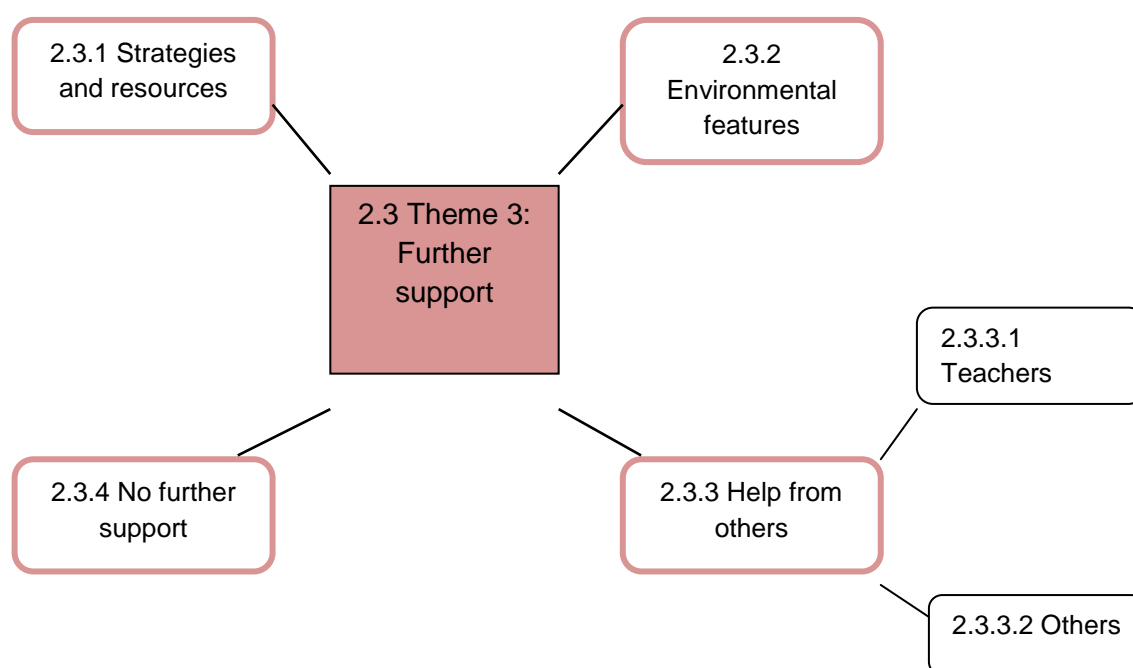


Figure 4.18: A Thematic Map of Theme Three: Further Support

Strategies and Resources (subtheme 2.3.1)

Interestingly, this subtheme was only evident in children's responses when discussing support for literacy and not language skills. This may suggest that children feel the need for more concrete support in relation to their literacy skills.

Comments related to both strategies:

Interviewer: But what would help you to improve your reading?

Jessica: To like be highlighted, the words highlighted.

Interviewer: What do you think would help to make it a bit better?

Harry: Ehh, more writing; I quite like writing.

And resources:

Interviewer: So what would help you a bit more with your writing do you think?

Jessica: I think that we should all have them things on the bottom of our pencils, just to like help us.

Environmental Features (subtheme 2.3.2)

Once again this feature was only explicitly acknowledged by a small number of children, more specifically two of the eight who were interviewed. However, those children clearly identified in general discussion that features of the environment, in particular a quieter environment, would support them in their skill development and therefore it was felt important to include. Whilst one of the children was one who had previously raised the issue, another also recognised the need for a quieter environment to support learning suggesting perhaps that currently they continue to be distracted.

Interviewer: What do you need more of to help you with your reading, do you think?

Harry: Ehh..more, more, more, more, more quiet.....Eh, everyone keeping quiet cos I don't like loud noises.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything that you think would help you a little bit more with your writing?

Lucy: No, just a bit more quieter.

Interviewer: What would help you to be able to talk to other people a bit more?

Harry: Ehh

Interviewer: Think of something that we could tell Bernie.

Harry: Ehh. When it's quiet.

Help from Others (subtheme 2.3.3)

Within this subtheme comments related predominantly to further support for language skills. However, further analysis of all extracts indicated that children would like further support either from teachers or from others.

In relation to support from teachers one child stated that they would welcome more of this:

Interviewer: Ahh so you've been doing exercises with your hands in nurture? Practising. Is there anything else in nurture that's helped you with your writing?

Tom: No

Interviewer: No okay. Right can you think of anything else that would help you a little bit more?

Tom: If Miss XXXX could help me a little bit.

Interviewer: Is there anything that would help you a bit more with listening?

Tom: If Miss XXXX tell me and I wouldn't forget.

One child also commented that they would appreciate support in the form of a lack of consequences from the teacher to assist her in talking to others:

Jessica: I know what we could change in class; getting no names on the board.

This may suggest that Jessica knows she struggles to talk to others appropriately when she is distressed or frustrated due to being in trouble.

Interestingly, the child experiencing a difficult morning appeared to be rejecting help:

Interviewer: What do you think would help you with your reading?

Daniel: Nothing.

Interviewer: What would make it easier?

Daniel: For people to go away and I do it myself.

It was unclear whether this response was due to his experiences that morning, or a difficulty in accepting help from others, which is associated with insecure attachment behaviour (Geddes, 2006). Consequently, it may be that he feels suffocated and under pressure from the support in the NG.

With regards to support from others, this subordinate subtheme arose solely in relation to language skills and appeared to reflect the children's desire for other people to be supportive of their needs during interactions:

Interviewer: Okay, what do you think would help you a bit more to be able to talk to other people?

Jessica: If other people told me how to talk to them, or say if they had feelings and stuff like that, they just talk calmly back.

Harry: Eh hh. When it's quiet and then when I talk to the person I want to talk to and he listens.

These extracts may suggest that children feel uncertain in social situations due to the unpredictable nature of other's responses and that they can struggle to manage such responses if they are not as the child had anticipated.

No Further Support (subtheme 2.3.4)

This subtheme was the one which children most regularly commented on and they often identified that they could think of nothing which would support them further. This was true for both literacy and language skills:

Interviewer: is there anything that you think would help you a bit more with your reading?

Ben: No

Interviewer: No, can you think of anything?

Ben: No, can't think of anything from my head.

Interviewer: And is there anything that you think would help you a bit more with your writing?

Ella: Can't think, dunno.

Interviewer: Okay, do you think anything would help you talk to other people a bit more?

Jack: No

It was unclear whether the children's responses were due to them feeling fully supported or whether they found the type of question difficult to answer. Tom's response would suggest that the latter was the case:

Interviewer: What would help with your reading there?

Tom: Umm, hardest question.

However, the responses evident in the subthemes above would suggest that the question was accessible, at least to some. Interestingly, it was predominantly the older children interviewed who were able to provide suggestions.

In summary, children predominantly did not identify a need for further support in NGs. This may be due to a difficulty in accessing the question and can be used to identify the importance of using the appropriate methodology with children. In this instance even with supportive materials (scales, symbols, prompt questions) this question appeared too difficult for the younger children to

access, perhaps due to its more abstract nature and its requirement to consider the future. However, those responses provided suggest that this group of children would find it useful to be provided with: greater concrete strategies and resources to assist literacy skills; a quieter environment in which to learn; and support from others, particularly during social interactions.

Theme Four: Application of Self to Learning

The fourth main theme represents the children's recognition that the intervention had supported their ability to engage with their work and is entitled 'application of self to learning'. Six of the eight children interviewed made reference to the fact that the NG had somehow supported them in applying themselves to their learning.

Comments often seemed to relate to improved listening and the ability to ignore misbehaviour:

Interviewer: So how has it helped you, what've you been doing?

Ben: I've just been listening more I guess, just been getting on with my work and listening.

Tom: Don't listen to other people being naughty and I don't look around.

Jack:..They help me listen.

Interviewer: They help you listen.

Jack: Very much

Interviewer: Very much. How do they help?...What do you do in nurture that helps you to listen?

Jack: Ignore people when they're being naughty.

These comments suggest that the children have begun to make a concerted effort to ignore distractions and resist being drawn into negative incidents which is helping them to focus more upon their own work and activities.

Others also spoke about putting more effort into the work they complete and the concentration that they are applying:

Jessica: Well. I'm up to level 5 in that one, that one's really good and I've been working much harder with level five.

Jack: I've been working, I've been writing much better.

Interviewer: And, let's tell Ben, whether you think the nurture group has made a difference to your writing?

Lucy: Well yes it has.

Interviewer: How has it made a difference do you think?

Lucy: Well I'm concentrating more and I feel more confident really.

This increased effort also seems to have supported the children in feeling more confident and proud in their work.

What is of interest is that the children were able to recognise that the NG had made an impact upon their learning and were able to pinpoint this to certain skills. Interestingly, these perceptions were also apparent when children spoke of the NG in general (section 4.3.1) and were able to identify improvements in personal skills including learning and behaviour.

Theme Five: Confidence

The final theme identified in relation to section two of children's interviews concerns children's comments which were indicative of a change in their personal confidence relative to language and literacy skills. The overarching theme and subthemes are displayed in figure 4.19. Whilst only 1 student presented a negative comment and 6 gave positive comments it was felt important to include negative comments as a subtheme, both to acknowledge that child's feeling and reflect the greater number of positive comments.

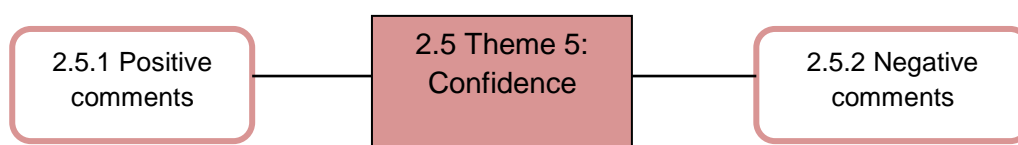


Figure 4.19: A Thematic Map of Theme Five: Confidence

Positive Comments (subtheme 2.5.1)

The majority of comments provided by the children indicated that the NG had supported their confidence and their belief in their capability, and this was true for both language and literacy skills.

Interviewer: Why did you choose that one?

Ben: Cos it's made a big difference to my listening. So when I wasn't in nurture or XXXX's I wasn't that good at listening.

Ella: Umm yeah it did help me a lot. Last time I was shy to talk to others.

Interviewer: And now are you still shy, or a bit shy, or fine?

Ella: Fine now.

Ben: Uhh...it's uh helped me keep it in the lines and umm, made me umm just good at writing.

Interviewer: Okay, I know you're in your new nurture class has that made a difference to your reading?

Lucy: Mmm yes. It's made me feel much more comfortable, much more confident.

The comments presented within this theme arose through natural conversation when enquiring of the children whether the NG had been of help. They reflect some of the children's beliefs that they have been successful in developing certain skills and they seemed to attribute these improvements to being in the NG.

Negative Comments (subtheme 2.5.2)

Conversely one pupil made negative comments which were indicative of a lack of confidence and focused upon their reading ability.

Interviewer: Okay. Now I have come and spoken to you before about your reading do you remember?

Daniel: I can't read.

Daniel: Nothing works

These comments suggest that Daniel continues to find reading difficult and that the NG has not yet been successful in improving his confidence or changing his perception around reading. However, they were the only negative comments of this kind given and once again were provided by the child experiencing a difficult morning.

Scaling

As previously noted (section 3.6.2) children were asked questions from section three of the interviews pre/post-intervention with the hope of determining any change in their constructs around language and literacy following NG access. Originally the researcher had planned to also thematically analyse the third section of children's interviews. However, this project was undertaken within the remit of a piece of LA research and as it progressed the researcher became aware that the available data was vast and that it would be difficult to complete all the planned analyses within the research timescale. Therefore, she made the decision to instead consider any change as evident from the children's scaled responses, feeling that this would provide further feedback to support conclusions about whether the children found the NG helpful regarding their language and literacy development, and would prevent a loss of data. If children's constructs were found to be more positive following NG access the researcher felt that this may further support the children's views that the NG had supported language and literacy skills.

Below is an overview of some of the key findings, although these are not exhaustive. The scaled scores represent children's responses to questions using a scale from 1-10, with 1 representing that the child feels they are not very good at that skill and 10 that they believe they are well able. Initially, graphical displays are presented relative to key language and literacy skills. Subsequently the findings are discussed. It should be noted that data is missing for Daniel who was unable to complete his post-intervention interview.

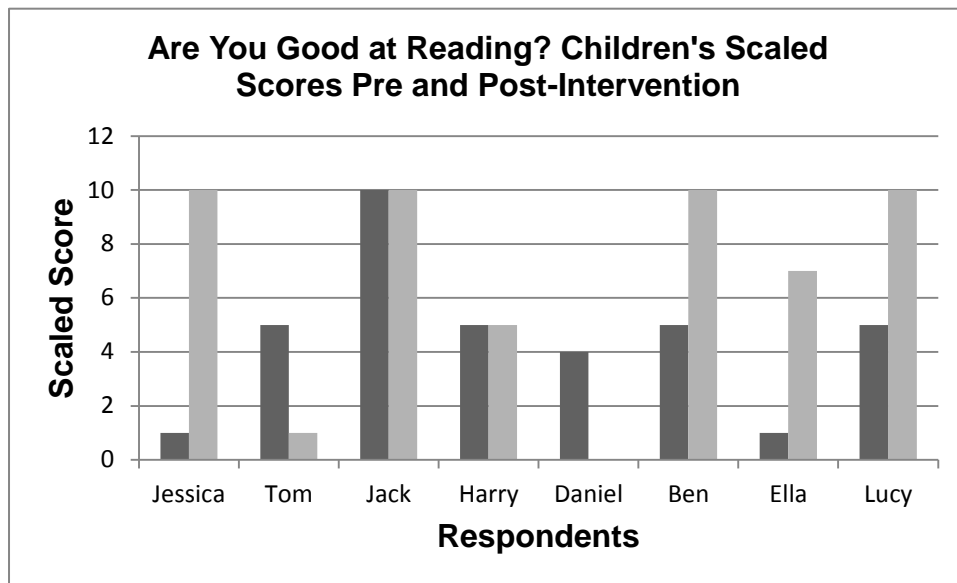


Figure 4.20: Children's Scaled Scores for Reading

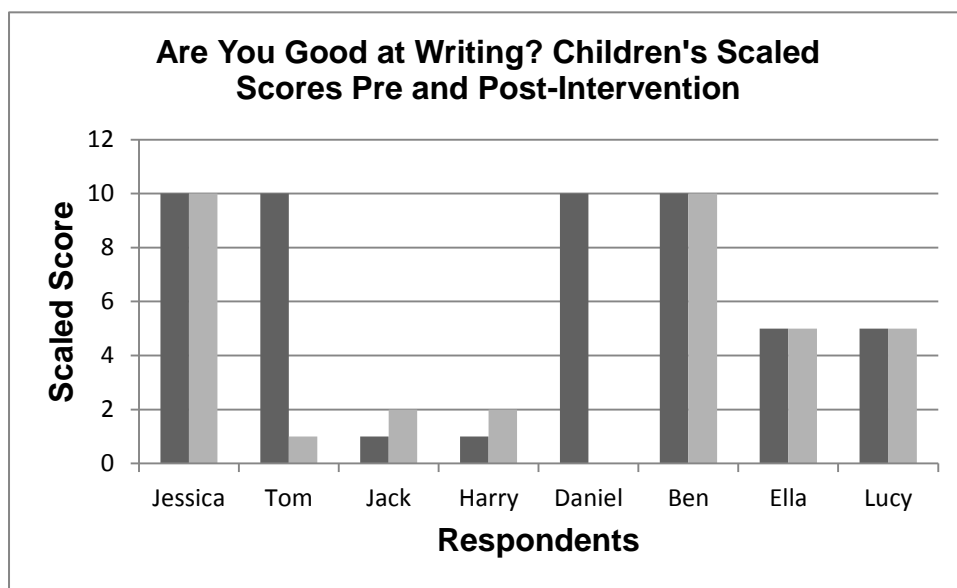


Figure 4.21: Children's Scaled Scores for Writing

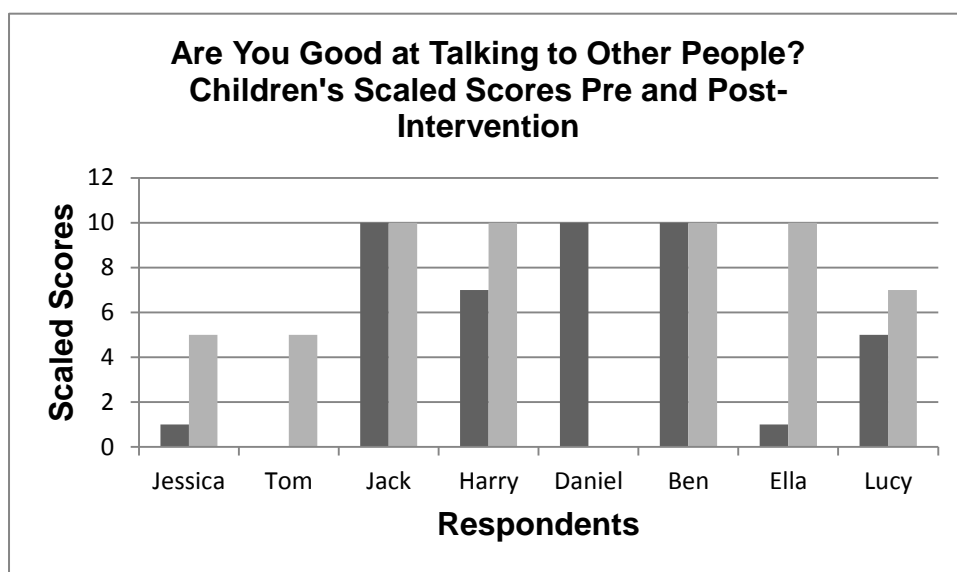


Figure 4.22: Children's Scaled Scores for Talking to Others

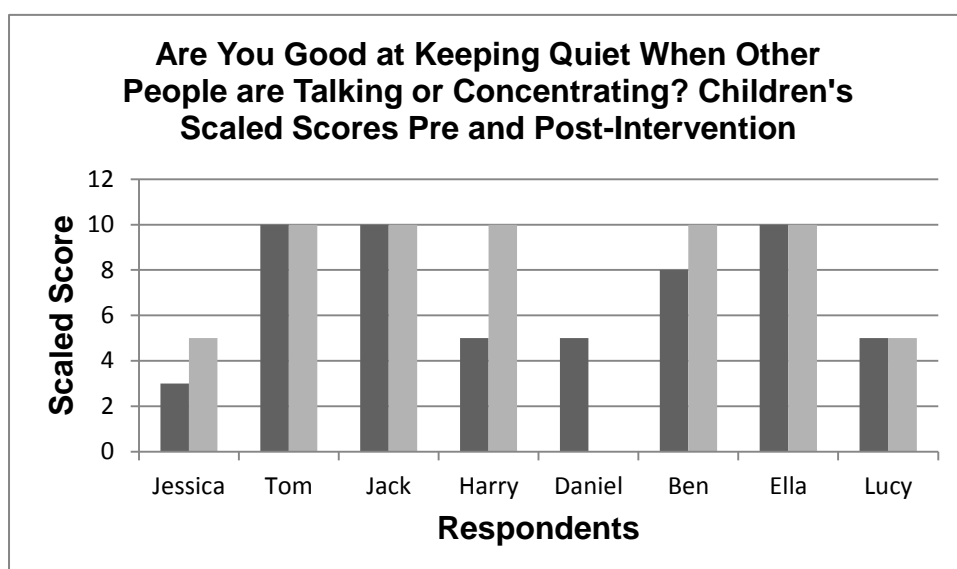


Figure 4.23: Children's Scaled Scores for Keeping Quiet/Listening.

Summary of Scaled Responses

The findings suggest that approximately half of the children demonstrated an improved perception of their ability to 'read' and 'talk to others' following NG access, whilst this was true for approximately a quarter of the sample relative to 'writing' and 'keeping quiet/listening'. Interestingly, Tom demonstrated a lower ability rating post-intervention for both 'reading' and 'writing'. This regression

may be the result of difficulty with presented work, or he may have become more aware of his difficulties following access to the NG. Several children also demonstrated no change in their perceptions.

These findings could be seen to contrast slightly with the themes identified during TA. Whilst the scaled responses suggest that no more than half of the children perceived their language and literacy abilities to have changed, the identified themes suggested that children predominantly felt the NG had made a difference to these skills and that some of the children had become more confident in their ability. The slight discrepancy may reflect the children's belief that these skills have improved within the NG but an inability for some of them to currently generalise this perception beyond the NG setting and recognise that their ability extends to different contexts. In aiming to encourage attachment relationships and children's self-esteem it is believed that NGs support the development of children's self-concept (Bani, 2011). However, due to the short-term nature of the evaluation it is possible that whilst the children recognise the impact of the NG upon their learning, this is not yet reflected in their perceptions around learning and their perceptions of themselves as learners, as this is a longer process. Alternatively, children may experience success in the NG which is not translated to other settings such as their mainstream class. This can result due to ineffective communication between the NG and mainstream setting (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005) and would likely impact upon their more general perceptions around learning. However, the findings do suggest that for some children access to NGs can support improved perceptions relative to different skills, in this way they also provide some further evidence to suggest that NGs can be helpful in the development of children's language and literacy skills.

4.3.3 Summary of Qualitative Findings

Section 4.3 has presented the findings from TA of the qualitative data. Distinct themes have been presented which it is felt represent an overview of the children's experiences of NGs; both generally, and more specifically in relation to language and literacy development. Key findings include recognition of the intervention's impact upon the children's learning, behaviour and social skills. In relation to children's learning an impact was acknowledged upon their language

and literacy development, whilst findings were also suggestive of an improvement in children's confidence and their readiness to learn. Further insight was also offered relative to valued aspects of the provision and supportive features.

It is perhaps important to note the on-going negative commentary from Daniel as this has impacted upon the findings. It is difficult to determine whether such responses represent his true feelings about the NG or are a reflection of his negative experiences that morning. Such a difficulty is perhaps representative of a potential difficulty in interviewing, but particularly in interviewing young children, and is a point to consider.

4.4 An Overview of the Research Findings

This research employed a complementary mixed-methods design whereby the quantitative and qualitative data were obtained to answer different RQs. It was hoped that this design would allow for: the triangulation of information, measurable outcomes relative to the children's language and literacy skills, and further insight into the intervening processes behind the outcomes obtained. The quantitative findings suggested a general trend towards improvement in the children's language and literacy skills following NG access, although findings must be interpreted with caution and further research will be necessary to validate the results. Interestingly, particular challenges were acknowledged with regards to the children's communication skills and their reading comprehension skills suggesting that these may be areas for which children with SEBD require more focused support. The qualitative findings provided evidence to both support the identified outcomes and expand upon these further. The qualitative data suggests that overall the children enjoyed the NGs and recognised its impact upon their learning, behavioural and social skills. Change was also acknowledged relative to the children's language and literacy skills, thereby providing support for the quantitative data. In addition, the children identified aspects of the NGs which they had valued and which were supportive to them, thereby supporting understanding of the NGs influential processes. Although employed to answer different RQs in this instance the quantitative and qualitative data allowed for some triangulation of the data to suggest that NGs can impact positively upon children, including their language and literacy skills.

4.5 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter has presented the research findings. The following chapter now discusses the main findings further in relation to the RQs, the research literature and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter presented both the quantitative and qualitative research findings. This chapter provides an overview of the main findings and discusses these in relation to the RQs. The research literature and theoretical frameworks are then reviewed. A discussion of the limitations of the research and the implications for further research are provided. Finally, the implications of the research findings relative to NG and EP practice are considered, alongside the researcher's reflections on the research process.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

This research aimed to evaluate the impact of NGs on a small sample of primary-aged children, including their progress in language and literacy. The provisions were newly established and delivered in accordance with the Boxall guidelines (NGN, 2011) and NG principles (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006). They differed in structure to the 'classic Boxall NG', running on a part-time basis and were therefore classed as a 'variant group' (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001). Investigating impact using a mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to consider both the effectiveness of the intervention (outcomes), and the intervening processes responsible for any change observed, thereby providing a context for the data. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods also allowed for data triangulation, thus supporting the validity of the results.

Summary of the Main Findings Based on the Quantitative Methods

- The results suggest that children's language skills improved following access to the NG. Whilst not all measures provided a significant difference, scores showed a positive increase.
- Children's literacy skills also showed improvement following access to the NG. Once again, although not all outcomes were significant, a positive change was evident.
- Interestingly, the children encountered particular difficulty with their communication skills and their sentence comprehension skills, as evident by their mean scores which fell well below the average range. This suggests that they would benefit in particular from further support in

these areas and upholds the need for early intervention to support adjustment.

- The results may be seen to represent a trend in the data, suggesting a positive impact. They are important in acknowledging the potential impact of NGs upon children's language and literacy development
- Caution is necessary when interpreting the results due to; the small sample size, the variance within the group, the presence of outliers, and relatively high standard deviations.
- The results clarify that although accessing a more holistic curriculum; children within NGs continue to make academic progress, enabling a platform for further success.

Summary of the Main Findings Based on the Qualitative Methods.

- The children predominantly enjoyed accessing the NG and viewed this positively.
- Children recognised the impact of the NG upon their learning, behavioural and social skills.
- Children acknowledged an impact upon their language and literacy skills, this varied relative to the individual child.
- A change to children's confidence and their ability to engage with their learning was evident, highlighting the impact of NGs upon children's readiness to learn.
- Valued and supportive features of the NGs were identified including: NG activities; rewards; the environment; the delivery of curriculum tasks; the provision of strategies and resources; and the relationships which children encountered.
- A slight overlap was evident in the themes identified for section one and two of children's interviews, particularly in relation to the intervening processes (e.g. support from staff, environmental features). This is of interest as it supports the strength of the processes identified, suggesting that these are inherent to the provision and support all aspects of children's experiences within NGs.

- The qualitative findings provide further support for the quantitative findings, identifying that children perceived a positive impact upon their language and literacy skills and supporting understanding of this impact.

The findings provide an important contribution to the evidence base surrounding the impact of NGs upon young children. Triangulation of the data has helped to identify that NGs can have a positive impact upon children, including their language and literacy skills, and has supported understanding of this. This latter factor, achieved through the inclusion of qualitative methods, is particularly significant as it allows for opportunities to optimise the effects of the intervention and thereby encourage greater progress. Importantly, this impact applies to newly established provisions, suggesting that academic outcomes may continue to improve as the provisions continue to run. Furthermore, the findings also relate to part-time provisions, a pertinent consideration given the current economic climate.

5.3 Discussion of the Main Findings

The main findings will now be discussed in accordance with each RQ in turn and considered in relation to the previously presented research literature. Whilst analysis of the quantitative data sought to address RQs one and two, analysis of the qualitative data supported answers to RQs three and four.

5.3.1 RQ1: Do Measures of Children's Language Skills Show Improvement Following Access to the Nurture Group?

As identified previously (section 4.2) the children's language skills were measured pre/post intervention. Whilst the CCC-2 produced a 'general communicative competence score' following the assessment of children's expressive, receptive and pragmatic language skills, LL produced a standardised score having assessed receptive language ability.

The research results indicated that:

- Children's scores on the CCC-2 demonstrated a significant improvement following NG access, with an increase in the mean score across the children from M=46.40 to M=53.53. The effect size ($d=0.4$) suggested

that the size of the change resulting from the NG was considered 'small' (Green & Salkind, 2003).

- The children did not display a significant improvement in their LL score. However, the mean scores suggest a positive change with an increase from pre- (M=101.40) to post-intervention (M=104.40). It is important to acknowledge that the use of standard scores in contrast to using raw scores may have masked the extent of the children's progress (see page 74). As the mean standard score has increased, although not at a significant level, this would suggest that progress is evident and this may have been more readily observed in the children's raw scores.

Overall, the results suggest that the children did demonstrate improvement in their language skills following NG access. Interestingly, this improvement is more pronounced when considering all aspects of children's language skills as opposed to considering receptive language ability in isolation. Therefore, it is possible that the children displayed greater progress in elements related to their expressive or pragmatic language skills, as measured by the CCC-2, which led to the significant score increase on this measure; perhaps due to the greater difficulty they appeared to encounter with these skills. This identified challenge further supports the importance of the focus upon social skills and interactions within NGs. Given this discrepancy future research may wish to consider more specifically change in relation to different domains of children's language ability.

Although a positive influence is observed it is important to note the 'small' effect size obtained for children's communicative competence and the lack of a significant improvement relative to children's LL scores. In relation to the later factor this result could be due to the reduced sample size on this measure, which may have prevented a level of significance. In addition, the level of variation in the children's scores (see page 76 & 78) may have impacted upon results; although the available t-score would suggest, being above 1, that there is a greater difference between scores (i.e. pre/post) than within scores (i.e. within pre-intervention or post-intervention scores) (see page 78). However, it is also possible that considerable change to children's language skills may be unrealistic due to the NGs newly established nature, and that greater gains would be expected once the provisions had been running for longer. This

concept is supported by Cooper & Whitebread (2007) who identified that NGs established for more than two years were more likely to produce significant behavioural changes than newer provisions, a finding which may also extend to academic outcomes. Similarly, full-time provisions may have encouraged greater progress due to their more intensive nature, a factor which will require further investigation. Finally, given the recognised difficulties which children with SEBD face in relation to their speech, language and communication skills (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2012), a notable impact following intervention to support children's language skills may require additional time (Heneker, 2005). Thus, although there is evidence of improvement, several factors may have contributed to the extent of this improvement and changes in such areas may therefore allow a greater degree of progress.

The measured improvements to children's expressive, receptive and pragmatic language skills support the findings of a recent Ofsted survey (2011) which identified that a NG's continual emphasis on language ability had supported children's ability to express themselves and improved their social and academic understanding. It is unclear to what extent the NGs evaluated in this research placed an emphasis upon language. However, it is theorised that such skills are facilitated through the relationships that children establish within the group, and in the conversations modelled by staff (Boxall, 2002), as well as through both formal lessons and informal opportunities (play, snack time, circle time) (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007; NGN, 2011). Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that NGs can support language development and that this is achieved through fundamental NG practice. Future research may wish to determine whether the extent to which NGs place an emphasis upon language skills influences the results obtained. The results also support findings from interviews with caregivers which found that a commonly observed NG outcome was developing language and communication skills (Ofsted, 2011). In addition, findings from the CCC-2 support anecdotal evidence from Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) which suggested that children had developed clearer speech and a greater willingness to communicate (see section 2.4), thereby indicating improvements to expressive and pragmatic language skills.

Importantly, this research has been the first to provide a measurable outcome of children's language skills following NG access. Furthermore, the results suggest a trend towards the positive impact of NGs upon these skills, improving the robustness of the research evidence, whilst also supporting previous findings.

5.3.2 RQ2: Do Measures of Children's Literacy Skills Show Improvement Following Access to the Nurture Group?

Children's literacy skills were also measured pre/post intervention to determine any improvement in scores following NG access. The use of the WRAT 4 provided standardised scores for children's word reading, spelling, sentence comprehension, and reading composite ability. The second literacy measure, NCLs, provided categorical data in the form of reading and writing levels for children.

Overall the research results indicated that:

- The children's spelling scores showed a significant improvement following NG access, with an increase in the mean score across the children. The effect size ($d=0.5$) suggested that the size of the change resulting from the NG intervention was considered 'medium' (Green & Salkind, 2003).
- Conversely, children did not display a significant improvement in their word reading score. However, the mean scores suggest that a positive change was observed, with an increase in score across the children from pre- ($M=89.43$) to post-intervention ($M=93.50$). The increase in the mean score would suggest that progress is evident. It is important to acknowledge that the use of standard scores in contrast to using raw scores may have masked the extent of the children's progress (see page 74).
- The children's sentence comprehension and reading composite scores were suggestive of an improvement and the researcher noted that a greater number of children were able to access these sub-tests post-intervention.
- The children's NCL data supports the WRAT4 data, with over half of the sample demonstrating an improvement in reading and writing levels

following NG access. Data was available for 15 participants on this measure. Interestingly, whilst 13 of the participants demonstrated an improvement in their reading NCL, nine demonstrated an improvement in their writing NCL.

Overall, the available results suggested that measures of the children's literacy skills showed improvement following NG access. However, the results indicate that NGs impact upon different literacy skills to varying degrees. For example, a greater gain was evident for children's spelling scores as opposed to their word reading scores, whilst the children's ability to understand what they were reading improved at a greater rate in comparison to their ability to read singular words. Interestingly, the mean scores suggested that the children's ability relative to 'comprehension' fell well below the average range, in contrast to their 'word reading' ability which was average. Their progress may therefore be reflective of the greater difficulty they initially encountered, and it is important to note that, despite progress, this skill continues to present a challenge. Previous studies which have investigated NGs and literacy outcomes (Reynolds, Mackay & Kearney, 2009; Scott & Lee, 2009) have reported on literacy outcomes in general. Therefore, future research may wish to consider NGs impact upon different literacy skills, and the literacy skills for which the children require further support, in order to target support most appropriately.

Once again whilst a positive impact was observed suggesting that NGs can support children in their development of key skills it is important to acknowledge that further evidence of change may have been apparent with more established NGs (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007). Similarly, it is possible that full-time provisions may have supported greater progress, as suggested by the discrepancy in outcomes between Reynolds, MacKay & Kearney (2009) who found that children made significant gains following access to full time provision, whilst Scott & Lee (2009) demonstrated evidence of progress within part-time NGs but not at a significant level. Interestingly, whilst this research found that part-time NGs can encourage significant gains in relation to certain literacy skills, the level of significance found was lower than that established by Reynolds et al (2009). Coupled with the findings of Scott and Lee (2009) this may therefore suggest that discrepancies relative to academic outcomes and

full and part-time NGs may be an interesting area for future research to address. It is also important to note that the small sample size may have impacted upon the strength of the results. In relation to children's word reading ability a larger sample may have yielded a significant result, particularly given that the calculated value (0.06) was very close to a significant value. Finally, the slight discrepancy between the WRAT4 and the NCL data must be acknowledged, as whilst the WRAT4 data indicated that children displayed a greater gain for writing skills (spelling) the NCL data suggested the greatest improvement related to reading ability. However, this contrast may be due to the assessment of slightly different skills given that NCLs are an applied measure and therefore include a broader range of skills.

The measured improvements to children's literacy skills do provide support for the previous findings. For example, they support the findings of Reynolds, Mackay and Kearney (2009) who found that children attending NGs showed significant attainment gains over six months in comparison to controls, as measured by the Baseline Assessment for Early Literacy (MacKay, 1999;2006). In addition, the results provide an important contribution to the evidence surrounding part-time NGs. Previously Scott and Lee (2009) investigated academic outcomes in part-time NGs and found that NG children made greater literacy gains in comparison to a control group, but that this improvement was not significant. This research supports these findings to suggest that part-time NGs can have a positive impact upon children's literacy development and extends this to suggest that gains relative to certain skills are significant. However, it would seem that further research investigating part-time NGs and academic outcomes is necessary to both clarify the extent of the impact, given the slight discrepancy, and to include controls in order to determine the extent of this improvement in relation to NGs.

Importantly, these results have provided a measurable outcome of children's literacy skills following access to NGs, providing further support for previous research findings and improving the robustness of the research evidence. In providing evidence of academic progress they help to suggest that NGs are successful in extending children's wider achievements beyond that of progress relative to social, emotional and behavioural development.

5.3.3 RQ3: What are the Children's Views about Attending the Nurture Group?

As acknowledged previously this research adopted a Critical Realist epistemology, believing that an outcome is dependent upon mechanisms acting in particular contexts (Robson, 2011). Therefore qualitative methods were employed to allow for consideration of the mechanisms which relate to the intervention's success. Section 4.3.1 presented the findings obtained from TA of the first section of children's interviews, providing data to develop further understanding of children's views about attending the NG. Given the Critical Realist approach these findings will now be considered in terms of the outcomes and processes identified.

Outcome Factors

Some themes generated from the data could be considered the outcome factors related to the NG. These included 'feelings toward the nurture group' and 'personal skills development'.

Importantly, the children's enjoyment of the NG was apparent:

Ben: It's the best!

Tom: Err...because when I first started nurture was when I was five and I love it.

This supports the findings of Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) who identified that children speak very positively of NGs. However, as identified within the previous chapter it can take time for some children to develop this positive attitude. Children need to trust in the reliability of the provision and they need time to develop attachment relationships. This finding is supported in part by previous research and the response of a nurture group teacher who identified that:

'It has taken us two terms...We are finally getting to that stage where the children allow themselves to be nurtured. We have attachment and I think it took us a long time to get' (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005, p.215).

This is perhaps a particularly pertinent point for newly established provisions which may be expecting evidential changes to children's behaviour; suggesting a difficult settling in period, and providing a reminder that change, at least initially, may take time.

Another theme providing further evidence of outcomes linked to the impact of the NGs, concerns the children's recognition of the development of their skills in several areas. For example, the children themselves were able to explicitly recognise a positive impact relative to learning, behaviour and social skills. These findings support those of Sanders (2007) who found through interviews with staff and parents that children were better able to regulate their behaviour and establish more positive friendships, whilst children reported better friendships and their concepts of themselves as learners improved. In addition, Cooper & Tiknaz (2007) report that students described improvements in their behaviour management and ability to engage socially with others. Finally, the findings also support those of March and Healy (2007) who found that parents reported progress in two main areas: social and academic skills. Furthermore, in relation to academic progress these parents commented upon improvements including reading and sounds, writing and spelling; as well as improvements to skills underpinning academic progress, such as trying hard, listening, and paying attention. This distinction in learning skills was also evident within the current research with themes representing a difference in children's 'readiness to learn' and feeling more 'supported in curriculum activities'. Findings therefore uphold the view that NGs help to provide the foundations for learning (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000; Boxall, 2002).

Process Factors

One key process which was generated from the data relates to the children's relationships. The children identified that they had established positive relationships with the NG staff whom they found accessible and helpful. These findings were also supported by Garner and Thomas (2011) who identified that secondary aged children appreciated close relationships with NG staff. Interestingly, one child within this research acknowledged that NG staff could still be a little 'shouty' like normal teachers, suggesting that she prefers the predominantly more calming and sensitive approach adopted by the NG staff

(Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). The children also identified that they had enjoyed playing with other children in the group suggesting that they had formed positive peer relationships. However, it is important to note that these relationships could also present the children with difficulties as they found some children within the group challenging due to their behaviour. This may suggest that the group composition can influence the child's chance of success. Cooper and Tiknaz (2005) also identified this factor when interviewing NG staff who recognised that group composition could impact upon the effective running of the group. Furthermore, this concern was also reflected during their discussions with pupils who identified discomfort with other pupil's disruptive behaviour.

The children also alluded to the quieter environment of NGs, supporting the findings of Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001), and thereby suggesting another influential process. Their comments indicated that they preferred being within a smaller group which led to a reduced noise level and which they found less overwhelming. Indeed, Seth-Smith et al (2010) suggest that the smaller environment allows for greater feelings of support from staff and peers, enabling a reduction in the children's anxiety in comparison to the mainstream classroom. One child also identified that she enjoyed the opportunity for more personal space and the chance to retreat when this was needed following an incident.

In addition, the children acknowledged their enjoyment of activities within the group. Play in particular, was identified as an activity that was fun, a finding supported by Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001). The children often mentioned play alongside snack time suggesting that these were valuable elements of the provision, again this is of interest as they are key elements of the NG routine (Boxall, 2002; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Interestingly, the children also acknowledged work activities which they had enjoyed, identifying these as something that was fun, which is perhaps unexpected given the nature of the children and their recognised difficulty with curriculum subjects (Mowatt, 2009). References to teacher support and enjoyment of activities perhaps indicates influential processes relative to such enjoyment.

A key theme identified within this research which is not apparent in previous research, was the children's enjoyment of the rewards they received. Many of

the children commented upon this aspect of the provision and it appeared to be a feature which they particularly valued and one which drove them to achieve both behavioural and educational goals. Again this is of interest as it is a feature of the provision which could be seen to strive towards a key principle of the approach 'nurture is important for self-esteem' (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006).

Findings support those of Cooper, Arnold and Boyd (2001) who found that children acknowledged interpersonal relationships, the quieter environment and opportunities for free play as important aspects of the provision. Moreover, the findings suggest that young children are able to talk about aspects of the group which they find valuable. Interestingly, the processes identified appear to reflect key aspects of the provision as originally identified by Boxall (2002). Therefore, they can be seen to reflect the underlying attachment principles of the approach and the importance of social interaction for developing skills.

5.3.4 RQ4: What are the children's views about whether the NG helped their language and literacy?

TA was undertaken on the second section of children's interviews to consider their views upon NGs linked to language and literacy development; the children's scaled responses were also considered relative to their perceptions of themselves as learners. Once again, this process was informative and it is possible to consider the findings in relation to both the outcomes and processes of NGs.

Outcome factors

One of the clear themes providing evidence of the outcomes linked to the NGs was the children's 'views about impact'. This suggested that the majority of the children were clear that the NG had made a difference to their reading and writing skills, and their ability to listen and to talk to others. It is important to note that individual children appeared to experience impact in different domains, probably as a result of their own individual skill set, strengths and weaknesses. This perceived impact upon academic skills is supported in part by Binnie and Allen (2008) who found that 67% of teachers and 91% of parents reported perceived academic progress. Findings also support those of March and Healy

(2007) who identified that parents commented on improvements in reading, writing and speaking; whilst surveys undertaken by Ofsted (2011) have suggested that parents identify improvements relative to both attainment and speech and language skills. However, no previous research appears to have explicitly asked children about the impact of NGs on their learning experiences. Thus, these findings add an important dimension to the evidence base suggesting that children also acknowledge the impact of NGs upon their learning.

The theme 'application of self to learning' (see page 128) suggests another important outcome. This theme reflected an improvement in the children's ability to engage with their work; they reported improved listening skills, greater concentration, and increased work effort. The findings support those presented by Sanders (2007) who found that staff identified increased motivation as an influential variable in children's academic progress, whilst observations also suggested developments in children's concentration and interest in engaging with their learning. March and Healy (2007) have also reported that parents felt children had better skills in listening and paying attention. Importantly, this research suggests that children are also aware of these changes and recognise the development of skills in relation to their learning, in contrast to previous research which draws on adult perceptions of progress. This is an important outcome to acknowledge as it would suggest that part of the NGs success lies with their ability to support the children's readiness for learning, an outcome which Boxall (2002) would argue stems from assisting the development of basic and essential early skills, thereby enabling the children to meet their potential in the classroom.

Finally, some of the children indicated that the NG had supported their confidence relative to language and literacy skills. Their comments suggested that they had belief in their capability, and they appeared to attribute these improvements to the group.

Interviewer: Why did you choose that one? (refers to the child's selection of a scale point)

Ben: Cos it's made a big difference to my listening. So when I wasn't in nurture or XXXX's I wasn't that good at listening.

These findings are supported by Garner and Thomas (2011) who found, using focus groups and individual interviews, that staff, parents and children acknowledged children's improved self-esteem in relation to several areas including social situations and learning. Furthermore, during their investigation of changes to children's literacy, numeracy and motor skills, Scott and Lee (2009) obtained anecdotal evidence from case study reports which indicated improvements in children's confidence and therefore their ability to work independently. The finding is particularly pertinent as NGs are designed to enhance children's self-esteem; and improved confidence due to a sense of achievement is likely to further support children in their readiness to learn, encouraging motivation, concentration and independence, and enabling children to become leaders of their own learning.

Process Factors

The main theme 'supportive features' (see page 116) helps to provide an indication as to potentially influential processes linked to NGs and learning. One of the features apparent within this theme relates to 'teacher support' suggesting that for some children the NG staff had been influential in supporting their language and literacy development. This support appeared to relate either to the availability of staff, or the strategies and understanding which they were able to provide. The availability of staff support was also identified by Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) as a key factor which encouraged children's learning. However, previous research does not indicate that children benefit from the provision of strategies which teachers facilitate, perhaps due to the paucity of research considering children's views regarding NGs and learning experiences. Therefore, this research has helped to provide further understanding as to the influential processes within NGs supporting children's learning.

One child identified that the quieter atmosphere in the NG environment supported his learning. This was reinforced within the main theme 'further support' where the children identified that an even quieter environment would help and that they don't like loud noises. Once again, this finding supported that of Cooper and Tiknaz (2007) who identified that children of all ages appreciated

the quiet and calm offered by the NG environment. They were able to elaborate upon this further, possibly due to the older age of some of the children providing information by suggesting that a quieter environment could support the children's concentration and understanding. The age of participants is therefore a pertinent consideration in research with young children, as older children may be more able to explain their views, and researchers must bear this in mind when considering the research purpose.

The children's comments also suggested that the way in which curriculum activities were delivered supported their skill development. More specifically they appeared to benefit from specific and targeted support in relation to their language skills through activities such as circle time and listening games, whilst the use of creative approaches and differentiated materials appears to have assisted their literacy development. This is a particularly pertinent finding, and one which should also be considered within mainstream classrooms, as it would suggest that the delivery of the task is all important in supporting children's learning. Interestingly, the approaches which the children have identified are encouraged in the NG curriculum; NG staff are advised to differentiate the work and focus this at a developmentally appropriate level (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007; Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006), whilst 'Nurturing Talk' (Education Bradford & Wigan Behaviour Support Team, 2007) encourages activities such as group discussion and talking partners. This research has therefore been important in identifying that these approaches are influential and integral to the intervention.

Finally, the children also recognised the importance of supportive strategies and useful resources in assisting their language and literacy development. This may suggest that they benefitted from having more tools at their disposal. In relation to their language skills, the children responded to strategies to support social interactions such as eye contact and conversation starters, providing further support for the idea that focusing upon social skills is key within NGs. With regards to literacy, the children talked about benefitting from strategies such as sounding out, and physical aids such as pencil grips to make the task easier. Once again, there is a lack of previous research to support this finding. However, it may also prove a pertinent consideration within mainstream classrooms, suggesting that the provision of strategies and resources may

facilitate children's learning by providing a certain sense of security and encouraging confidence.

Interviewer: ten again! (referring to the scale) Why did you choose that one?...How has it made a difference to your writing?

Tom:...Because umm it gives my hand some exercise and I put a thing on my pencil and it helps me with my writing.

During the interviews, the children were also able to acknowledge some factors which may be of further support to them in developing learning skills. They included: the provision of further strategies and resources, a quieter environment, support from teachers, and support from other people during social interactions. These therefore highlight the importance of the factors already discussed as children reiterate these as something they would like still more of.

The findings obtained suggest that children do perceive the NG to have helped their language and literacy skills. This is also supported in part by evidence from children's scaled responses (see section 4.3.2), although the findings suggest that this improvement is not yet perceived beyond the NG context. In relation to the outcomes identified, these findings are supported by previous research, although this is predominantly provided through the perceptions of the adults involved. With regards to the processes identified, this research has been illuminative in identifying important features of the provision which support children's learning. The researcher would therefore argue that accessing the children's views has been of paramount importance, as whilst previous research has acknowledged the impact of NGs upon children's learning through parent and staff perceptions, it has been less favourably placed to determine the intervening processes supporting the outcomes obtained.

5.4 An Overview of the Findings in Light of Attachment Theory

The research findings may be explained in relation to attachment theory, and indeed offer some support for this theoretical foundation. The principal emphasis of NGs is the development of secure attachments in an educational setting to facilitate learning (Cooke, Yeomans & Parkes, 2008). Integral to the

approach is the belief that effective learning is facilitated through an emotionally supportive environment and appropriate social interactions. This is achieved through the key principles of NGs including: the nurture class offers a secure base, language is a vital means of communication and nurture is important for self-esteem; and is facilitated through the importance assigned to the relationship between the child and the adult.

Boxall (2002) believed that the provision of a secure base was essential in allowing the child to feel safe, and for the development of a positive sense of self and a secure IWM; arguing for the necessity of laying the social and psychological foundations which enable children to engage with their learning. Subsequently the children are able to explore and experience their social, emotional and physical world. Therefore, she placed an emphasis on staff relationships with the children, recognising that children could form attachments with educational figures, using them as a secure base from which they would be able to separate in order to explore and take risks (Boxall, 2002); a feature which also assists in stimulating and developing the children's use of language and social skills. Indeed, evidence from attachment theory suggests that such interactions facilitate the process of reciprocity (Brazelton, Koslowski & Main, 1974; Murray & Andrews, 2000) enabling the child to become attuned to their responses and those of others, whilst simultaneously developing their language and vocabulary. Boxall's (2002) concept is supported in part through the measured improvements to children's language and literacy skills following access to the NG, suggesting that the attachment relationship was successful in stimulating the development of language skills and encouraging the child to take risks with their learning. It is further upheld through the identification of certain main themes linking to NG outcomes. Whilst the theme 'personal skill development' has helped to acknowledge that NGs equip children with basic social and emotional skills which are believed to lay the foundations for learning, the themes 'application of self to learning' and 'confidence' would suggest that the approach does indeed enable children to break down the barriers to their learning. Furthermore the intervening processes identified through the children's interviews would suggest that it is the emotional support and the social interactions inherent in the attachment principles which the children have valued. This is evident through recognition of the value they

placed upon both staff and peer relationships, as well as their acknowledgement of the emotionally supportive environment; evident through discussion of developmentally appropriate activities (play, snack, fun work activities), recognition of their achievements (rewards) and the smaller environment with opportunities for retreat

Recognising that the child's sense of security is fundamental to their ability to engage with their learning, NGs also recognise the importance of reducing the threat of the task and therefore advocate that children's learning is understood developmentally (Lucas, Insley & Buckland, 2006). This mirrors Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory and the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' and NGs seek to scaffold children's learning, stretching them appropriately through recognition of the child's actual developmental level. Interestingly, the children acknowledged this approach in the importance which they assigned to the delivery of curriculum activities. Here they identified the need for explicit instruction and specific activities targeting language skills which they are yet to develop, as well as the need for appropriately differentiated materials and a creative and practical approach to curriculum tasks which encourages their engagement with activities by reducing the inherent threat. Their acknowledgement of the importance of staff support also supports this theory.

The data available suggests that by addressing key attachment issues and providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum NGs can support children's academic development. Drawing on Bowlby's (1980) theory of internal working models it is likely that such progress is achieved through greater exploratory behaviour and participation, with both the attachment relationship and the reduced threat of the task (due to its positioning at an appropriate level) encouraging the child to take risks with their learning.

Thus far this chapter has considered the main findings of this research in accordance with the RQs, the research literature and theoretical frameworks. The following sections will now proceed to address the research limitations, implications for EP practice and education, and the researcher's position.

5.5 Limitations of the Research Findings and Implications for Future Research

Recognising the limitations of this research is important as it highlights potential implications for future research investigating the impact of NGs. It also allows for greater understanding of the reported findings. In acknowledging the limitations this section addresses the following areas: sampling, data collection, intervention delivery, and generalisability.

5.5.1 Sampling

Several factors must be considered in the participant sampling for this research. Firstly, sample size should be discussed. Sixteen pupils drawn from two separate schools and two separate NGs participated in this research. Whilst the sample size was deemed large enough to generate valuable data within a small scale study, a larger sample would have supported the generalisability of findings and may have allowed for further findings of statistical significance. In addition, whilst justifications are presented for taking the sample as a whole (see section 1.6 & 3.5.1) and this is an approach common to this area of research, the variance amongst the participating children should be acknowledged. Potentially influential variables included: the children's age, the school they attended, and their presenting difficulties. All of these may have had some influence upon the results obtained and are factors which will require further investigation.

Secondly, comparison groups were not included in this research, due to certain ethical implications, as well as practicalities linked to both undertaking further assessment and matching pupils appropriately. Consequently, it is not possible to determine that the findings are due solely to the children accessing the NGs (see section 3.5.2). However, the qualitative findings provide some support for the NGs influence upon the recognised outcomes by helping to acknowledge the intervening processes and corroborating the quantitative data.

Finally, there were two children who spoke English as an additional language (EAL) included in this research. This may have had implications for the findings obtained, particularly given the focus upon language and literacy development. Their inclusion was however felt to be appropriate as the measures utilised

were suitable for use with EAL children. Nevertheless, this may be a factor to consider in future research.

5.5.2 Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data was obtained through a number of measures, supporting the findings' validity, although unfortunately there were associated limitations. Firstly, it could be argued that the measures were not sensitive enough to demonstrate the extent of progress the children made. Staff members often reported that the children had made substantial progress and were able to support this through their observations of developing skills and the children's recorded work. However, significant results were not evident for all of the measures used, and did not reflect the children's improved ability to engage with the presented tasks, which was also a substantial indicator of progress.

Another possible limitation could be the element of subjectivity inherent in the CCC-2 and NCL measures. This may have allowed the results to be influenced by the desire of respondents to demonstrate progress. However, triangulating results with those from the children's assessments went some way to addressing this. Although it is important to acknowledge that the extent to which the different assessment tools measured precisely the same skills may have been limited. Nevertheless, this triangulation will have supported the validity of the findings', whilst the measures were selected on the basis of the strengths they could bring to the study (see section 3.5.2)

It should also be acknowledged that the progress identified in relation to children's language and literacy skills cannot be solely attributed to the NG. It is possible that other factors in interplay could have impacted upon the outcomes and contributed in part to the results and findings obtained. For example, it would be expected that the children would make gains in their language and literacy development as a result of being in school between time 1 (pre-intervention) and time 2 (post-intervention), whilst their increase in age and therefore cognitive maturity may also have influenced their development. Consequently, some of the observed development in the children's language

and literacy skills may instead relate to these factors and it is difficult to determine the extent to which NG access may be responsible for any progress, particularly given the absence of a control or comparison group. Similarly, due to the part-time nature of the provisions, the children also received education outside of the NG. During the 'other half of the day' at school it is not known to what extent the children may have received an additional level of support in class or had access to small group/individual support relative to their language and literacy skills. The education they received outside of the NG may therefore also have impacted upon and contributed towards the progress observed, the effects of which cannot be isolated from the impact of NG access.

A control or comparison group matched in respect to age and educational provision would have gone some way towards alleviating the impact of additional factors, allowing any further progress to be attributed to the children's NG access. As discussed previously (section 3.5.2) it was not possible to include such a group within this particular research project due to ethical and practical factors. On reflection, the researcher recognises that access to the children's previous NCLs, as well as additional teacher based assessments, may have enabled consideration of any variation in rates and levels of progress prior to and following NG access. If progress had been more pronounced for the majority of children post-intervention, this may have provided further evidence to suggest that the NG access had made a difference. Importantly, in the absence of certainty regarding the extent of the NGs impact upon the children's language and literacy skills, the qualitative aspect of the research helps to attribute and triangulate the identified outcomes to the intervention. This is achieved through the children's views that the NG had made a difference to their language and literacy skills and their acknowledgment of the intervening processes supporting their learning.

It is also important to recognise that factors relative to home circumstances may have affected the children's outcomes. For example, parental ability/capacity to support progress in language and literacy skills and exposure to learning opportunities within the home may also have had an impact. Such factors may have influenced the children's confidence, approach and commitment towards their learning and therefore the outcomes obtained. This is therefore an area

which it may be important to consider in future research regarding NGs and academic outcomes.

Qualitative Data Collection

Gaining an understanding of NGs from the children's perspective was felt to be important, and therefore Semi-structured interviews were employed to support answers to the two qualitative RQs.

However, concerns have been raised previously regarding the use of children as participants. For example, there is a view that children are more likely to be led by: the presence of an adult/researcher; features of the context; and types of questions (Lewis, 2001;2002); thus bringing into question the validity and reliability of findings. Given that the researcher was a TEP who was skilled in working with young children, and through her experience had a variety of methods at her disposal to elicit young people's views, it was felt that she would be able to: pitch questions appropriately; place the children at ease; and encourage honesty in their responses. Therefore the approach was deemed appropriate, although, there was some evidence that certain questions were not readily accessible for all of the children, regardless of the supportive measures and prompts (see section 4.3.2). Nevertheless, the researcher would suggest, given the insight offered by the data, that rather than discounting children as participants, greater efforts should be made to determine how best to access their views.

Another possible limitation is that the qualitative sample (the children engaging in interviews) were selected by the nurture teachers, which may have had an impact upon the findings obtained. For example, it is possible that the nurture teachers may have chosen children who they felt would provide positive views on the provision. This could therefore have introduced an element of bias to the findings and inaccurately reflected the experiences of all those involved. However, the researcher felt that the sample was large enough to represent the children's views, whilst the inclusion of data from 'Daniel' helps to indicate that the data set was not biased. Furthermore, the researcher believed that it was important for an adult familiar with the children to guide the sample selection, as they would be able to consider those children who would be comfortable

engaging in the interview process and would be able to access the questions presented. Whilst this may also have introduced a further element of bias by possibly promoting the stronger voices amongst the sample, it was felt to be an important step to take in order to minimise the possibility of any participant distress.

Finally, the researcher's interpretations will have had some impact upon the findings. This is a common difficulty with qualitative research and therefore appropriate steps were taken. For example, by utilising a research diary and engaging in supervision the researcher was able to be reflexive and aware of her influence in the research process. In addition, a complete record of research activities was maintained to explain any decisions made and actions taken, and the inclusion of quantitative methods allowed for some triangulation of the data.

5.5.3 Intervention Delivery

With regards to the intervention delivery several factors must be considered. Firstly, as previously noted this research considered participants drawn from two separate NGs. Therefore, it is possible that there were differences in the content and delivery of the intervention, and the approach of the staff, which may have influenced results. However, as both groups adhered to the six principles of NGs and the 'classic' Boxall guidelines, it was felt that this difference was minimised. In addition, a NG co-ordinator was employed during the course of the research to support shared practice across provisions. Nevertheless, discrepancies between the provisions were apparent such as: their level of curriculum focus, support from the senior management team, the training and experience held by the NG staff, and the permanency of the nurture room. These are all factors which may have impacted upon the findings and should be considered in further research. In particular, future research considering academic outcomes may wish to consider the impact of a NGs level of curriculum focus.

In a similar vein the provisions evaluated were newly established and participants formed the first NG cohorts. Cooper and Whitebread (2007) have found previously that children in NGs established for less than two years often display positive behaviour change but at a non-significant level, a factor which

may also influence academic outcomes. Furthermore, it is suggested that interventions should only be evaluated once they have been trialled a few times (Robson, 2002). However, the researcher would argue that evaluating the outcomes for initial cohorts remains important in determining whether positive effects are identified, and therefore whether the intervention can continue to be advocated.

5.5.4 Generalisability

As Robson (2002) identifies, generalisability concerns the extent to which findings are applicable to other clients and settings. The sample of children participating in this research represented both males and females, a varied primary school cohort, and schools in areas of social and economic deprivation in the south east of England. However, the researcher accepts that the findings can only be associated with these particular schools and pupils. To support the generalisability of findings a larger sample size, across a greater number of NGs, would help to extend this to a population of children with SEBD and NG provisions.

5.5.5 Summary

In light of the points discussed above there are several implications for further research. These include: increasing the sample size; considering more established provisions; and reducing the variance amongst participants. Comparison groups may also be beneficial to allow for more direct evaluation of NGs. Importantly, this research has provided a small, but useful, study considering the impact of NGs upon young children, including their progress in language and literacy. These findings may now be built upon and further explored through future evaluation and research which acknowledges the identified implications.

5.6 Implications for Education and Educational Psychology

This research has been important in demonstrating the value of early intervention as an approach to support children with SEBD. The findings suggest that NGs have had a positive impact upon young children with SEBD, an outcome which extends to their learning, language and literacy skills, alongside their social and emotional development. A unique contribution was

evident in the efforts made to provide measurable outcomes of the children's language development, and also in asking the children explicitly about the impact of NGs upon their learning, the latter of which helped to identify the powerful impact of NGs upon children's readiness to learn, through factors such as their improved confidence and greater ability to engage with their learning, linked to their social and emotional development. Interestingly, findings highlight the specific support children with SEBD require relative to their social and communication skills. The implications of these findings for both Educational Psychology practice and the researcher's LA are now listed, prior to recognition of how these findings will be reported back to the various stakeholders of the research.

Implications for EPs:

- The findings are important in suggesting that NGs can impact positively upon children with SEBD and may be one way in which schools can seek to address these children's needs.
- The importance of laying the social and psychological foundations to facilitate learning is highlighted, an implication for EPs to consider in their individual practice, and in the knowledge they share with schools.
- The findings suggest that children with SEBD may experience particular difficulties with sentence comprehension and communication skills, therefore these will be important factors to seek to address.
- It is important to consider ways to access the child's voice and the importance of this for supporting the understanding and development of interventions. The methodology used in this research was helpful in eliciting responses from young children and may suggest useful tools for teachers and EPs to employ when seeking feedback.
- The factors which children drew attention to need to be acknowledged and where possible elements of this incorporated into mainstream practice. For example, their responses indicate that a quieter and less busy working environment can be supportive, that rewards can be important for supporting confidence and self-esteem, and that the way in which curriculum activities are delivered can have a significant impact

upon learning. It will be important for EPs to share such knowledge with teaching staff to promote academic outcomes.

- The implication is that attachment experiences can impact significantly upon a child's social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive development. EPs are well placed to support the understanding of school staff in this domain and therefore raise awareness to develop best practice. This may also encourage nurture to filter into the whole school ethos, which previous research has found to be instrumental in the success of the approach (Doyle, 2003; Lucas, 1999).
- MacKay, Reynolds and Kearney (2010) note that EPs are also well placed to support schools in developing NGs as an effective provision to support children with SEBD. They are able to support the planning of the intervention, to share good practice, to support the assessment of participating children, and to contribute to practitioner research.

Implications for the Researcher's EPS and LA:

- The findings from this research will help to inform the EPS and LA as to the impact of NGs upon young children, relative to both their benefits and influential processes. This will have implications for the development and delivery of further NGs within the LA.
- Interestingly, although not included as a theme, because it was not directly relevant to the RQs, some children suggested improvements which could be made to the NGs. These can be found in appendix 18 and may be useful in supporting development of the provisions.
- The findings suggest the potential of NGs for supporting the attainment of children with SEBD, a recognised challenge within the LA. Therefore it is also hoped that the curriculum aspect of the provision will be advocated alongside social and emotional development.
- Findings may also contribute to wider practice, with recognition of factors which can support children with SEBD, both generally (e.g. support for social and behavioural skills, supportive relationships) and more specifically in relation to language and literacy development (e.g. provision of supportive resources, differentiated delivery of curriculum materials).

Feedback of the Results

- Some informal feedback has already taken place with schools whereby the researcher has provided an overview of the findings through discussion. Responses have suggested that schools are pleased with the outcomes and intend to uphold the provisions. More formal feedback will also be offered during a scheduled meeting with staff members and Senior Management Teams.
- The researcher will seek to share the findings with parents through invitation to a meeting at the school. She will present the main findings and be available to address any questions. A letter containing this information will also be sent to those involved, thanking them for their participation.
- The researcher also hopes to share the findings with the participating children in a child friendly way, and likely in a visual format, to thank them for their contribution.
- In the near future a presentation will be offered to the EPS who commissioned the research.

5.7 Reflections

Having presented the majority of the thesis in the style of the third person this section will now change to that of the first person, to explore the researcher's thoughts and experiences more personally and support an understanding of her approach. The importance of reflexivity is widely acknowledged within the research literature (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999; Willig, 2008) and, given the researcher's involvement in the study and therefore their influence in the construction of meanings, is certainly important here. Indeed:

‘One cannot escape the personal interpretations brought to qualitative data analysis’ (Creswell, 2003, p.182).

The Researcher's Reflections

Initially, I was apprehensive about carrying out the research, particularly the research's qualitative aspect as I sought children as participants' and worried about their ability to provide informative and valuable information. However, I found that my experience as a TEP enabled me to build a rapport with the

children and to address potential problems such as maintaining their attention and encouraging discussion. I also found the use of resources particularly supportive (i.e. scales, symbols, interview scripts) as these enabled me to engage the children, whilst retaining a focus upon the research problems I was seeking to address. Whilst I was apprehensive about conducting interviews with the children, I also felt that this was important to the research, believing that it was necessary to gain the children's views to achieve a better understanding of NGs and more appropriately support them. In this way I felt that I was giving the children a voice and empowering them by aiming to make them a part of the research and not just an object of it.

I did experience some pressures during the research process, often related to my position as a trainee EP and researcher. For example, I was anxious about my role in supporting pilot provisions within the LA and felt that this placed a responsibility upon me for their success. In addition, I had built relationships with the NG staff and children and wanted their hard work and subsequent progress to be acknowledged. These factors created a tension for me in remaining objective about the research and I had to remain mindful of their influence throughout. However, ultimately, I found the research process to be both an interesting and challenging journey, and one which drew my attention to my own core values in my practice as an EP, namely the importance of accessing children's views, of evaluating the impact of interventions, and of seeking the context behind the data.

5.8 Conclusion

This research evaluated NG interventions in a southern region of the U.K. to consider their impact upon young children. The researcher believes that the project has advocated mixed-methods evaluation as a robust process which can allow for more comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomena. Importantly, the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data helped to suggest that NGs can have a positive impact upon children's development, including their language and literacy skills. This finding may help to highlight the academic profile of NGs, which can be seen as secondary to social, emotional and behavioural development (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Ofsted, 2011). Therefore, this may also be important in improving outcomes for children,

suggesting that the holistic curriculum provided by NGs and their approach at an appropriate developmental level are key features of the provision and can prevent further maladjustment. The findings are particularly significant given the co-morbidity of language and literacy difficulties amongst pupils with SEBD (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2012; Mowat, 2009, Tommerdahl, 2009), and they may suggest that access to NGs could be one way to address these difficulties. Furthermore, these findings arise from the evaluation of newly established NGs suggesting that positive effects are achievable from the outset, whilst also supporting previous research in demonstrating that part-time provisions can impact positively upon children with SEBD. To provide further support for these findings and to extend these, further research would now be beneficial. In particular research including control or comparison groups would help to improve the robustness of the findings and allow for more direct evaluation of NGs. However, arguably the most important aspect of this research was the access it allowed to the child's voice. This enabled the children to become a part of the process and not merely an object in the research. Subsequently, it allowed for recognition of the more subtle outcomes linked to NGs, including an improvement in children's readiness to learn, as evident by their improved confidence and greater ability to engage with their learning. More importantly, however, it provided an indication as to the integral processes within NGs which can support success and which may also be useful to consider within wider classroom practice in the support of children with SEBD.

'It's made me feel much more comfortable, much more confident'.

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Appendices

Contents

- Appendix 1 Results of the Systematic Literature Review
- Appendix 2 An Overview of the Research Procedure.
- Appendix 3 The Script and Associated Prompts for Children's Interviews
- Appendix 4 Materials to Support Children's Interviews
- Appendix 5 Letter of Ethical Approval
- Appendix 6 Parent Information Leaflet
- Appendix 7 Parent Consent Form
- Appendix 8 Children's Information Leaflet
- Appendix 9 Children's Consent Form
- Appendix10 Head Teacher Information Leaflet
- Appendix11 Head Teacher Consent Form
- Appendix 12 National Curriculum Level and P scale Conversions
- Appendix 13 The Researcher's Codebook
- Appendix 14 A Coded Transcript
- Appendix 15 A Thematic Map for Section One of Children's Interviews
- Appendix 16 A Thematic Map for Section Two of Children's Interviews
- Appendix 17 Collated Data Extracts for the Subordinate Subtheme 'Sad that it's Ending'
- Appendix 18 Children's Suggested Improvements to the Nurture Groups

Appendix 1: Results of the Systematic Literature Review

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'nurture'
Results	12,530
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1970-2012, English
Results	1,239

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'nurture groups'
Results	668
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1946-2012
Results	163
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Publication: Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties; British Journal of Special Education; Educational and Child Psychology, Educational Psychology in Practice.
Results	45

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'nurture groups', 'attachment'
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1946-2012
Results	16

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'nurture groups', 'education'
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1946-2012
Results	8

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete

Key Words Used	'nurture groups, 'language'
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1946-2012
Results	3

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'SEBD'
Results	216
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1997-2012
Results	74

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'SEBD' AND 'language'
Results	23
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1997-2012
Results	8

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	'SEBD' AND 'learning'
Results	50
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1997-2012
Results	10

Search Date	21/06/2012
Databases Searched	EBSCO, Academic Search Complete, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete
Key Words Used	Child's voice in research
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; 1997-2012
Results	35

Appendix 2: An Overview of the Research Procedure

Stage	Purpose and Activities	Tool Used	Timeframe
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher engaged in discussion with EPS to clarify her role, and that of others, in the evaluation of new NG provisions within the local authority. Clarification was sought as to which area the researcher was responsible for investigating, and an agreement reached as to which measures she would collect. An initial literature review was conducted by the researcher to assist in developing the research proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation. Electronic database search and supplement hand search. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2012.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher submitted application for ethical approval to the University as a request to conduct the research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical Application Form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2012.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical approval obtained. Researcher and EPS approached schools due to establish new nurture groups to identify participants. The researcher focused only upon those schools whose pupil intake coincided with her research time frame. Other members of the EPS supported additional provisions. Subsequently the researcher sought access to two schools. Researcher outlined the project to the nurture teacher and requested that pupil's parents were contacted in order to seek consent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2012. School A- February 2012. School B- March 2012.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher met with both parents and pupils to gain consent to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings to share information and consent forms (appendices 15-18). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School A- February 2012.

4			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School B- April 2012, June/July 2012.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-intervention quantitative measures collected by the researcher as a measure of children's language and literacy skills prior to the intervention. Boxall Profile data collected by the EPS for children entering the group- measure completed prior to children entering the provision to identify appropriate cohort and to measure progress relative to social, emotional and behavioural development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four instruments were used as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wide Range Achievement Test 4th Edition (WRAT 4) (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006). National Curriculum Levels (DFEE, 1999), reading and writing. Language Link (Speech Link Multimedia Limited, 2011). Children's Communication Checklist (CCC-2) (Bishop, 2003). Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School A- data collected February/March 2012. School B- data collected April 2012. (Due to problems with group composition some pupils changed therefore data collected for 4 additional pupils July 2012).
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-intervention interviews conducted by the researcher to consider children's concepts around language and literacy prior to the intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interview- using semi-structured interview framework (section 3) and prompts (appendix 11). Scale and symbols used to support pupil interviews (appendix 12). Portable digital recorder used to record interviews with the children and notes taken by the researcher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School A- interviews conducted March 2012. School B- interviews conducted April/May 2012.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcription of interviews from recordings by the researcher and an administrative member of the EPS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portable digital recorder and computer used to transcribe data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All transcription completed between June-September

			2012.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-intervention quantitative measures collected by the researcher as a measure of children's language and literacy skills following intervention. Boxall profile data collected by the EPS to identify any progress in children's social, emotional and behavioural development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four instruments were used as above. Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School A- data collected October/November 2012. School B- data collected for original cohort December 2012. Data collected for additional cohort February 2013.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Intervention interviews conducted by the researcher: to consider children's experiences of the group, to identify whether children perceive the intervention to have supported their language and literacy skills and to identify any change in concepts relative to language and literacy following intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interview as above with additional questions (sections 1 & 2) to consider children's experiences of the intervention and whether they perceived the intervention to have supported their language and literacy skills (appendix 11). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School A-interviews conducted November 2012. School B- interviews conducted December 2012.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transcription of interviews by the researcher from the recordings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portable digital recorder and computer used to transcribe data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All transcription completed between November-January 2012.
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher completed analysis of the data collected from the quantitative measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysed in relation to 2 quantitative research questions using SPSS and descriptive statistics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis completed February-March 2013.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher completed analysis of the data collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysed in relation to 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis completed

12	from both pre-and post- semi-structured interviews.	<p>qualitative research questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis used to analyse sections 1 and 2 of children's interviews. • Data described descriptively relative to section 3 of children's interviews due to time constraints and a large volume of data. 	February-March 2013.
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Appendix 3: The Script and Associated Prompts for Children's Interviews

Learning Outside School.

- 1.) What are you good at and what do you enjoy doing?

Section 1 of Children's Interviews (completed post-intervention)

Nurture Groups

- 2.) How do you feel about the nurture group? (Scale 1-10) (*main question*)
 - *What do you like, dislike? (prompt questions)*
 - *Have you always felt like this about the nurture group?*
- 3.) Have you had fun in the nurture group? (Scale 1-10)
 - *Is there anything that could make it better?*
 - *If you could change one thing what would it be?*
- 4.) The nurture group has made a difference at school? (scale 1-10)
 - *How has it made a difference, what has changed?*
 - *Differences to learning, behaviour, relationships?*
- 5.) What would you tell other people about the nurture group?

Section 2 of Children's Interviews (completed post-intervention)

Nurture Groups, Language and Literacy

- 6.) We've talked before about your reading. Tell me about what you've been doing in your reading?
 - *I know you're in a new class (NG) has that made a difference?*
 - *How have things changed?*
 - *Has the new class helped you with your reading? What's helped you? What do you need more of?*
- 7.) We've talked before about your writing. Tell me about what you've been doing in your writing?
 - *I know you're in a new class (NG) has that made a difference?*
 - *How have things changed?*
 - *Has the new class helped you with your writing? What's helped you? What do you need more of?*
- 8.) We've talked before about talking to other children and adults.
 - *I know you're in a new class (NG) has that made a difference?*

- *How have things changed?*
- *Has the new class helped you with you to talk to others? What's helped you? What do you need more of?*

9.) We've talked before about your listening and understanding.

- *I know you're in a new class (NG) has that made a difference?*
- *How have things changed?*
- *Has the new class helped you with good listening? What's helped you? What do you need more of?*

Section 3 of Children's Interviews (completed pre/post-intervention)

Literacy

10.) How do you feel about reading? (Scale 1-10)

- *Where would you put reading, why did you put it there, where would you put yourself, what does that look like?*
- *Where would you put reading/yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put it there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Attitude to reading at home, what books do you enjoy, do you read these, who do you read with, do you like being read to?*
- *Do you like stories?*

11.) How do you feel about writing? (Scale 1-10).

- *Where would you put writing/yourself, why did you put it there, what does that look like?*
- *Where would you put writing/yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put it there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Distinguish between ideas/spelling/handwriting, which do you find easy/hard, where would you put them.*
- *Preference for type of writing, stories, science, etc.*

12.) Are you good at reading? (Scale 1-10)

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Do you know the letter sounds, can you read words?*
- *Can you work out sounds in words, can you work out what the word says, can you work out what the story means?*

13.) Are you good at writing? (Scale 1-10).

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Can you write letters, can you write words, can you write sentences?*
- *Can you form letters, can you hold a pencil easily.....*

14.) The nurture group has helped me with my literacy. (Scale 1-10).

Language

15.) I am able to understand what the teacher asks me to do? (Scale 1-10)

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *What do you do when you don't understand, can you understand when the teacher explains it to you?*

16.) Are you good at recognising how other people are feeling? (Scale 1-10)

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Are you able to tell when people are happy or when they are upset or angry? How do you know if someone is feeling happy, upset or angry?*

17.) Are you good at talking to other people?

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Can you tell me three things that you should do when you are talking to someone?*
- *Children, adults, people you don't know?*

18.) How do you feel about talking to other children?

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Small groups, 1:1 situation.*
- *Are you able to join in with other children in the classroom, in the playground?*

19.) Are you good at keeping quiet when someone else is talking/ concentrating? (Scale 1-10).

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Do you find it easy or difficult? Are you able to listen well?*

20.) Are you able to tell other people what you are thinking? (Scale 1-10) (How easy is it for you to tell other people what you are thinking?)

- *Where would you put yourself, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there?*
- *Where would you put yourself now, what does that look like, why have you put yourself there, how has it moved, what has changed?*
- *Can you explain your ideas?*
- *Can you talk about things that have happened to you, things that you've learnt, about your family, pets....?*
- *Do you find this easy or difficult? Do you struggle to find the right words? Do you get muddled up when you talk?*

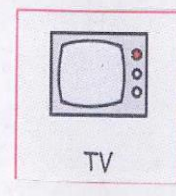
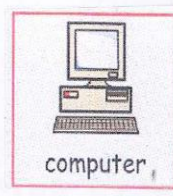
21.) The nurture group has helped me to talk to and understand people in school? (Scale 1-10).

Appendix 4: Materials to Support Children's Interviews

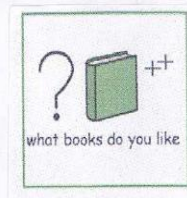
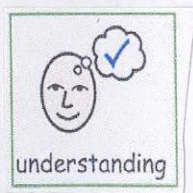
A vertical scale from 1 to 10. The numbers 1 through 10 are listed vertically on the left side of a horizontal line. Three smiley face icons are placed along the scale: a sad face at the top (near 1), a neutral face in the middle (between 5 and 6), and a happy face at the bottom (near 10).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

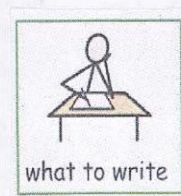
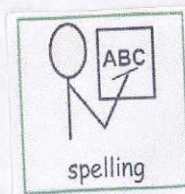
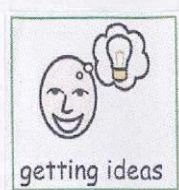
PRACTICE ITEMS



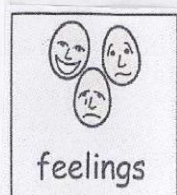
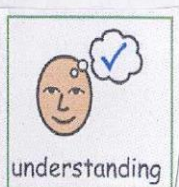
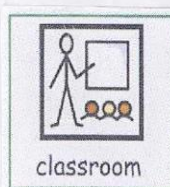
READING ITEMS



WRITING ITEMS



LANGUAGE ITEMS



Appendix 5: Letter of Ethical Approval

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.

UEL
University of
East London
www.uel.ac.uk

School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

Stratford Campus, Water Lane, Stratford, London E15 4LZ
tel: +44 (0)20 8223 4966 fax: +44 (0)20 8223 4937
e-mail: mno.davies@uel.ac.uk web: www.uel.ac.uk/psychology



The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2853



Parent Information Leaflet

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

My name is Claire Hosie and I would like to invite your child to take part in a research study in which I am looking at the impact of nurture groups upon young children in mainstream primary schools.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in the research study. The study is being conducted as part of my degree in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London. The aim of obtaining the data is to produce a written research thesis outlining the results obtained. The researcher will also produce a summary paper, or arrange a meeting at the school, to feedback the results of the study to parents and school staff.

If you have any further questions about the research after reading this leaflet or during the process of the study please contact me by phone or email, as outlined in the details below, and I will do my best to answer any queries you may have.

Project Title

Inclusive practice in primary schools: An evaluation of the impact of nurture provision upon young children.

Project Description

This piece of research is being conducted for the Educational Psychology Service and local authority, to determine the impact of new nurture provisions being established within the county. The researcher will be assisted in her data collection by members of the Educational Psychology Service, who will also obtain further measures to inform additional aspects of evaluation which the service are undertaking. Consequently, whilst the researcher will collect certain measures they will also draw upon some of the information gathered by the service.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about nurture groups, how they work in schools and how children respond to such groups. The research is being conducted to support Educational Psychologists' understanding of the impact of nurture groups as an inclusive measure within mainstream schools.

Your child has been selected to take part in this research as they are due to access or are currently accessing a new nurture group established within their primary school. If you consent to participate assessment measures will be conducted with your child both

before they enter the group and after they have spent approximately six months in the group. This will allow the researcher to evaluate the effect of the nurture group. Two of these measures will require your child to engage directly in assessment in order to test your child's skills in language and literacy. The remaining three measures will be completed by parents and class teachers and are based on the adults' observation and knowledge of the child. Thus you will be asked to complete a questionnaire based on your child's language skills and return this to the school/researcher. To support their evaluation the researcher will also access information obtained by the Educational Psychology Service in relation to your child, including Boxall Profiles and baseline information.

In addition to the above assessment measures some children will also be asked to engage in individual interviews with the researcher lasting approximately 30 minutes. If your child is selected to engage in an interview they will be asked to talk about the nurture group and various academic skills. It is important to note that anything that is said by the child during the interview process will be kept between myself and the child, remaining anonymous and confidential, unless they tell me something that would mean either themselves or somebody else is in danger.

There are no foreseen risks for the children. However, unfortunately it is not possible to guarantee that the children will not experience any discomfort or distress. Therefore, although this is unlikely, the children will be told that they are free to talk to either the researcher or a trusted adult within the school at any point throughout the research process. The researcher will also be careful to monitor the children's perceived well being.

Confidentiality of the Data

Any data obtained during the research process will be kept within a secure locked unit in an Educational Psychology Service base and if stored electronically on the computer will be held within a secure password-protected drive.

During analysis of the data participants names and contact details will be anonymised by replacing individual names with numbers, in order to enable confidentiality of information. Therefore participants will be referred to by number within transcripts and where data is reported. Once the research is complete the data obtained will be stored for five years before being destroyed, in light of the possibility of the research being published. The data to be stored will include personal assessment records and anonymised interview transcripts obtained both pre-, during, and post-intervention. Audio-tapes of individual interviews will be destroyed immediately following completion of the research.

Location

The research project outlined here will take place within your child's primary school alongside the nurture group. Any direct assessment completed with your child will be undertaken within the school, as will individual interviews. Members of the school staff who are familiar to your child, such as their class teacher and nurture teacher, will also be approached for knowledge and information in relation to the child.

Disclaimer

It is important to remember that you do not have to consent to your child taking part in the study, and that if you decline this will not affect your child's access to the nurture group. If you do provide consent you will have the right to withdraw your child from

the study up until the point where all post-intervention measures have been collected for your child. Following this stage all data will be anonymised and therefore untraceable. If you choose to withdraw your child from the study you may do so without disadvantage to either yourself or your child, and without any obligation to give a reason. If a participant withdraws from the study the researcher can no longer use their data for research purposes.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor: Laura Cockburn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: L.Cockburn@uel.ac.uk)

Or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn,
School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,
Claire Hosie
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 7: Parent Consent Form

Parental Consent

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

Inclusive practice in primary schools: An evaluation of the impact of nurture provision upon young children.

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I and my child will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my child's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study, and those from the Educational Psychology Service who are involved in evaluating the new provisions, will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to allow my child to participate in the study which has been explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study up until the point where all post-intervention measures have been collected for my child. I understand that I may withdraw my child without disadvantage to either myself or my child, and without any obligation to give a reason.

Parent's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Parent's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date:

Children's Information Leaflet

Hi.....

I'm called Claire and I've gone back to school to learn to become an educational psychologist. That's someone who tries to help schools understand and work with children better. For my homework I have to do a big project and I would like to look at your school's nurture group.



I hope that this will help schools to run nurture groups better. What you tell me might help other children who find school a bit difficult.

With your help I would like to find out whether the nurture group has helped you to keep calm in school and get on better with other children and school staff. I would also like to know whether it has helped you with your lessons and if you find it easier to tell people how you are feeling now.



If you would like to help me this is what will happen:

First, your class teacher and parents will help me by answering some questions about you, so you don't have to do all the work on your own.

Second, an adult from my work, who works a lot with children, will come to do some work with you on your English, maths and spelling to see what you find easy and difficult.

Finally, I will ask you and the children in your nurture group to talk to me about the nurture group together and tell me what you thought about it.

The only time I will tell anyone else what you have said is if you tell me something that means either you or somebody else might be in danger. Remember you don't have to take part and if you get upset talking about anything we can stop straight away.

When I have talked to other children I will write about what I have found out so that I can try to help schools and children. If you are happy to help me please tell either me or your class teacher.

Thank you for reading my information leaflet




Claire Hosie

Child Consent Form

This is the form that you will need to fill in if you are happy to help me with my homework project.

If you want to take part, we can work through this form together and complete it.

Please put a tick  in the box that you agree with for each question.

1.) I have read the information leaflet about Claire's homework project. I understand that Claire will look at the schools nurture group and that I might be asked some questions about the group.

Yes

☐

No- I would like to ask some questions.

☐

2.) I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I don't want to and that I can stop talking whenever I like.

Yes

☐

No

☐

3.) I understand that my answers to questions will be recorded on a tape.

Yes

☐

No

☐

4.) I understand that the only time Claire will tell anybody else about something I have said is if I say something which means that somebody will be in danger.

Yes

☐

No

☐

5.) I understand that I will do some work with an adult on my maths, English and spelling.

Yes

☐

No

☐

6.) I understand that my class teacher and parents will help Claire with her homework by answering some questions about me.

Yes

☐

No

☐

My Name:

School Information Leaflet

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

My name is Claire Hosie and I would like to invite your school to take part in a research study in which I am looking at the impact of nurture groups upon young children in mainstream primary schools.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in the research study. The study is being conducted as part of my degree in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of East London. The aim of obtaining the data is to produce a written research thesis outlining the results obtained. The researcher will also produce a summary paper, or arrange a meeting at the school, to feedback the results of the study to parents and school staff.

If you have any further questions about the research after reading this leaflet or during the process of the study please contact me by phone or email, as outlined in the details below, and I will do my best to answer any queries you may have.

Project Title

Inclusive practice in primary schools: An evaluation of the impact of nurture provision upon young children.

Project Description

This particular piece of research is being conducted for the Educational Psychology Service and local authority, in order to determine the impact of new nurture provisions being established within the county. The researcher will be assisted in her data collection by members of the Educational Psychology Service who will also obtain further measures to inform additional aspects of evaluation which the service are undertaking. Consequently, whilst the researcher will collect certain measures they will also draw upon some of the information gathered by the service.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about nurture groups, how they work in schools and how children respond to and receive such groups. The research is being conducted in order to support Educational Psychologists' understanding of the impact of nurture groups as an inclusive measure within mainstream schools.

Your school has been selected to take part in this research as you are currently establishing a new nurture group within your primary school. If you consent to participate the researcher will have access to the nurture group, school staff and the children involved, and assessment measures will be conducted with children both before they enter the group and after they have spent approximately six months in the group.

This will allow the researcher to evaluate the effect of the nurture group. Two of these measures will require children to engage directly in assessment in order to test skills in language and literacy. The remaining three measures will be completed by parents and class teachers and are based on the adults' observation and knowledge of the child. Thus class teachers who have a pupil accessing the nurture group will be asked to provide a national curriculum level relative to the child's literacy ability, both pre- intervention and six months later. They may also be asked to complete a questionnaire based on the child's language skills. The researcher will also access information obtained by the Educational Psychology Service, including Boxall Profiles and baseline information, in relation to the children involved in the study.

In addition to the above assessment measures some children will also be asked to engage in individual interviews with the researcher lasting approximately 30 minutes. If children are selected to engage in an interview they will be asked to talk about the nurture group and various academic skills. It is important to note that anything that is said by the child during the interview process will be kept between myself and the child, remaining anonymous and confidential, unless they tell me something that would mean either themselves or somebody else is in danger.

There are no foreseen risks for the children participating in this research project. However, unfortunately it is not possible to guarantee that the children will not experience any discomfort or distress. Therefore, although this is unlikely, the children will be informed that they are free to talk to either the researcher or a trusted adult within the school at any point throughout the research process. Thus allowing the child the opportunity to highlight any difficulties they may be experiencing. If the child chooses to discuss any issues with a member of school staff the researcher will be available to support the staff member and follow this up if necessary. The researcher will also be careful to monitor the children's perceived well being.

It is important to note that children will only become participants in this research study if informed parental consent is also obtained.

Confidentiality of the Data

Any data obtained during the research process will be kept within a secure locked unit in an Educational Psychology Service base and if stored electronically on the computer will be held within a secure password-protected drive.

During analysis of the data participants names and contact details will be anonymised by replacing individual names with numbers, as will the name and contact details of the school; in order to enable confidentiality of information. Therefore, participants and schools will be referred to by number within transcripts and where data is reported. Once the research is complete the data obtained will be stored for five years before being destroyed, in light of the possibility of the research being published. The data to be stored will include personal assessment records and anonymised interview transcripts obtained both pre-, during, and post-intervention. Audio-tapes of individual interviews will be destroyed immediately following completion of the research.

Location

The research project outlined here will take place within your primary school alongside the nurture group. Any direct assessment completed with children will be undertaken within the school, as will individual interviews. Members of the school staff who are familiar with the children, such as their class teacher and nurture teacher, will also be approached for knowledge and information in relation to the children.

Disclaimer

It is important to remember that you do not have to consent to your school taking part in the study, and that if you decline this will not affect your school's nurture group. If you do provide consent you will have the right to withdraw from the study up until the point where all post-intervention measures have been collected. Following this stage all data will be anonymised and therefore untraceable. If you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage, and without any obligation to give a reason. This in turn would necessitate that the researcher can no longer use any collated data for research purposes.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor: Laura Cockburn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: L.Cockburn@uel.ac.uk)

Or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mark Finn,
School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Tel: 020 8223 4493. Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,
Claire Hosie
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 11: Head Teacher Consent Form

Head Teacher Consent

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

Inclusive practice in primary schools: An evaluation of the impact of nurture provision upon young children.

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which the school will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that the school's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study, and those from the Educational Psychology Service who are involved in evaluating the new provisions, will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to allow the school to participate in the study which has been explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study up until the point where all post-intervention measures have been collected. I understand that the school may withdraw without disadvantage, and without any obligation to give a reason.

Head Teacher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Head Teacher's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date:

Appendix 12: National Curriculum Level and P scale Conversions

Student Number	Reading NCLs		Writing NCLs	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	1b (10)	2b (13)	1b (10)	1a (11)
2	1c (9)	1c (9)	P8 (8)	1b (10)
3	P8 (8)		P8 (8)	P8 (8)
4	1a (11)	2b (13)	2c (12)	2c (12)
5	P6 (6)	1b (10)	P8 (8)	1b (10)
6	1c (9)	1a (11)	1b (10)	1a (11)
7	P5 (5)	P7 (7)	P8 (8)	P7 (7)
8	P7 (7)	P8 (8)	P7 (7)	P7 (7)
9	1a (11)	1a (11)	1b (10)	1a (11)
10	2b (13)	3c (15)	1a (11)	2a (14)
11	1b (10)	2b (13)	1b (10)	2b (13)
12	1c (9)	1a (11)	1b (10)	1a (11)
13	3c (15)	3b (16)	3c (15)	3c (15)
14	1b (10)	2b (13)	1b (10)	1a (11)
15	2b (13)	2a (14)	2b (13)	2b (13)
16	2a (14)	3c (15)	2a (14)	2a (14)

The Codebook Generated for Section One of Children's Interviews

Category	Code	Description
Enjoyed NG	1ENG	Children discussing positive comments about the nurture group.
Having Fun	1F	Children's comments about the nurture group being fun.
Negatives	1N	Negative comments made by the children about the nurture group.
Sadness at ending.	1SE	Children's comments that they will be sad to leave the group.
Activities	1Act	Children's comments about activities performed in the group.
Rewards	1Rew	Children's comments about rewards received/available in the group.
Rewards	1Rew-St	Children's comments about stickers as a reward.
Rewards	1Rew-Dr	Children's comments about dragon characters as a reward.
Rewards	1Rew-T	Children's comments about reward time.
Play	1PI	Children's comments about play within the group.
Teachers	1Te	Children's comments about teachers and adult support within the group.
Peer Relationships	1PRel	Children's comments about relationships with peers within the group.
Learning/Work	1LW	Children's comments relative to learning/work activities within the group.
Improved Learning/Work	1ILW	Children's comments that they have improved at learning/work.
Improved Behaviour	1IB	Children's comments that their behaviour has

		improved.
Behaviour Approaches	1BA	Children's comments about approaches to behaviour within the group.
Improved Social Skills	1ISS	Children's comments that their social skills have improved.
Nurture Group Environment	1NE	Children's comments about features of the nurture group environment.
Resources	1Res	Children's comments about resources in the group.
Confidence-Positive Comment	1CP	Children's positive comments indicating confidence.
Confidence- Negative Comment	1CN	Children's comments indicating no/low confidence.
Basic Needs	1BN	Children's comments about basic needs.
Future Improvements	1FI	Children's comments about what could make the group better.
Future Improvements	1NFI	Children's comments that nothing could improve the NG.
Future Improvements	1FI-R	Children's comments about future improvements linked to rewards.
Future Improvements	1FI-E	Children's comments about future improvements linked to the environment.
Future Improvements	1FI-Res	Children's comments about improvements linked to resources.
Future Improvements	1FI-Rel	Children's comments about improvements linked to relationships.
Future Improvements	1FI-Act	Children's comments about improvements linked to nurture group activities.
Made a difference	1MD	Children's recognition that the group made an impact.
Impact not Noted	1NI	Children's recognition

		that the group did not make a difference in certain domains.
Feeling That other Children Would be Jealous	1J	Children's comments that suggest that the group has things which other children would want.
Miscellaneous	1MIS	Comments that did not fit the above categories or form their own category.

The Codebook Generated for Section Two of Children's Interviews

Category	Code	Description
Perceived Difference to Reading	2PDR	Children discussing a change to reading skills.
Perceived Difference to Writing	2PDW	Children discussing a change to writing skills.
Perceived Difference to Listening	2PDL	Children discussing a change to listening skills.
Perceived Difference to Talking to Others.	2PDT	Children discussing a change to their ability to talk to others
No Perceived Difference to Reading	2NPDR	Children recognising no change to reading skills.
No Perceived Difference to Writing	2NPDW	Children recognising no change to writing skills
No Perceived Difference to Listening	2NPDL	Children recognising no change to listening skills.
No Perceived Difference to Talking to Others	2NPDT	Children recognising no change in their ability to talk to others.
Confidence- Positive Comment	2CP	Children's positive comments indicating confidence
Confidence-Negative Comment	2CN	Children's comments indicating no/low confidence.
Teaching Approaches	2TA	Children's comments about teaching approaches used.
Practice	2P	Children's discussion of skills they have practised.
Resources	2Res	Children's discussion of available resources.
Strategies	2ST	Children's discussion of strategies they've been using.
Work Completed	2WC	Children's discussion of work completed in the group.
Further Help	2FH	Children's comments about what would help them further.
No Further Help	2NFH	Children stating that nothing else would help.
Environment	2Env	Children discussing the nurture group environment.

Teacher Support	2TS	Children discussing support received from nurture staff.
Mainstream Classroom	2MC	Children discussing features relevant to their mainstream classroom.
Personalising Equipment	2PE	Children's comments about personalising equipment available to them.
Difference to Work Approach.	2WA	Children discussing a change to their work approach.
Improved Behaviour	2IB	Children's comments which indicate an improved behaviour.
Improved Behaviour	2GC-IB	Children's comments indicating they have made good choices.
Improved Behaviour	2SC-IB	Children's comments indicating improved self-control.
Improved Skills	2IS	Children commenting upon improved skills.
Regressed Skills	2RS	Children commenting upon skills that have regressed.
Supported Understanding	2SU	Children's comments that suggest the group has supported their understanding of some area.
Unsure How Helped	2UH	Children recognising a change but unable to explain this.
Negative Comments	2N	Children making negative comments about the group.
Miscellaneous	2MIS	Comments that did not fit the above categories or form their own category.

Appendix 14: A Coded Transcript

Practice
Section of
Interview

Post-Intervention Transcript,

1	C	Ok. Hello, S1
2	S1	Hello
3	C	Ok. We're just going to be talking. I'm going to be asking you some questions. If there's any questions you don't want to answer, then you need to tell me you don't have to answer them, and anything that you tell me will be kept between me and you unless you tell me something that means that somebody else might be in danger. Ok
4	S1	Ok
5	C	Do you understand
6	S1	Yep
7	C	Ok. Brilliant! So, let's get going. Who have you got with you today?
8	S1	Warwick
9	C	Warwick. Ok. So the first thing that we're going to do is we're going to have a little practise to remind you of what we did last time. So we've got some faces here; can you tell me what you think they mean?
10	S1	That one means sad, that one means cross, that one means happy.
11	C	Very good. Very nearly right. This one is definitely happy, or we like it a lot; this one is definitely sad and we don't like it; this one actually means we don't mind or we're not sure. Ok. I'm going to give you some activities and I want you to put them next to the face to say whether you like them; you don't like them; or you don't mind. Ok. So the first one is 'computer'. Where would you put that on my scale.
12	S1	Ohh. Cos too much computer damages your eyes.
13	C	Ahh. 'Tidying your bedroom'.
14	S1	That one
15	C	You don't mind that one. 'Making things'?
16	S1	Ohh. Yes!
17	C	Ohh. Where have you put that.
18	S1	Happy face! Yes.
19	C	'Riding your bike'?
20	S1	Don't have one.
21	C	Ohh
22	S1	I'm getting one at Christmas. So I liked that.
23	C	Have you ridden a bike before?
24	S1	Yep
25	C	Yeah. What about 'playing'?
26	S1	Don't mind
27	C	Don't mind that one. 'Playstation'?
28	S1	Yeah
29	C	You Like that one.
30	S1	Me and my brother, we have...Well my brother don't play anymore, so it's only me plays on my Dad's Xbox, no, PS3, and we have 'Feed and Frenzy', and all sorts like that.
31	C	Ohh. Lots of games. 'Football'? You don't like that one. And 'TV'?
32	S1	Yeah

Post-Intervention Transcript, 1

Section One
of Interview

33	C	We like that one. Good! So, do you remember doing that with me before? Is it starting to come back? Yeah? Ok. Good. Now up here, what have we got?
34	S1	Lots of numbers. Sad face, happy face.
35	C	Scales. What does our scale go from?
36	S1	One to Ten
37	C	And it's got a sad face number one.
38	S1	Not sure face. And a happy face.
39	C	Well remembered. So. Number one is 'don't like it or we're not very good at it. Oh. Don't really like it; don't mind; like it a little bit; like it a lot; love it! All the way up to number ten. Ok. So the first thing I'm going to ask you is, 'How do you feel about the Nurture Group?' ok where would you put Nurture on my scale? Number?
40	S1	Higher than ten
41	C	You can't put it higher than ten
42	S1	Twenty
43	C	So number?
44	S1	Ten
45	C	Ten. Why did you choose that one?
46	S1	Because I love Nurture but I'm sad that it's going to be stopped
47	C	Are you. Bit sad, but it's not stopping altogether, is it? You're still going to be having time with Mrs XXXX. Yeah? They're going to be asking you back, to say hello, every so often. Yeah? What do you like about Nurture Group?
48	S1	That we get to play lots of stuff. And we get to do different activities, like making stuff and when you go there; I used to make visitors mats and stuff like that.
49	C	Ahh. So you like doing lots of different things.
50	S1	And working with Miss XXXX and getting lots of prizes out of the tin.
51	C	So working with Miss XXXX and lots of prizes. What do you get prizes for?
52	S1	Like when you get ten stickers. Yeah. When you get thirty. Yeah, pretend I have thirty stickers; I would, have to get like up to seventy.
53	C	Yeah
54	S1	But I have to get up to seventy stickers because that's how much I have to get - I have to colour in the tens, I've got to colour in how much of tens I get
55	C	Yeah
56	S1	And say if I got 39 I still get to colour in 4 because they're nearest, so I get to colour in 4 and then I've only got 3 more to go. And then if I colour in them 3 I get a prize out the tin.
57	C	And what do you get your stickers for?
58	S1	Working hard and doing it, working together.
59	C	Aaah. Fantastic. Is there anything that you don't like about the nurture group? What don't you like about the nurture?
60	S1	When everyone gets told off and when most people go down to the rain cloud. And then they go on to the

(1ENC)

(1ENC, 1SE)

(1PL, 1Act)

(1Te, 1Rew)

(1Rew, 1Rew-St)

(1BA, 1Rew, 1LLW)

(1N, 1BA)

Post-Intervention Transcript,

		thunder lightening.	
61	C	What happens when you go on to those?	
62	S1	I feel a bit sad because everyone we don't get snack time and we have to sit out and miss our whole snack time. But when I done it I was sitting there ignoring everything so miss let me go back to have snack time.	(1N, 1BA)
63	C	Aah you managed to turn it round did you?	
64	S1	Yep	
65	C	Well done. OK. Have you had fun in the nurture group? Where would you put that on my scale?	
66	S1	(Points) - number 10.	(1F)
67	C	Number 10. Why did you choose that one?	
68	S1	Because we get to do lots of activities. And we get to do even-Miss gives us work. Like she can help us with it and she gives us answers and then we can colour bits in and stuff like that.	(1Acl, 1LW, 1Te)
69	C	Aah. Is there anything that would make the nurture group better?	
70	S1	Nope.	(1NFI)
71	C	You can't think of anything that would make it better?	
72	S1	Nope	
73	C	If you could change one thing about nurture, what would it be?	
74	S1	(Lengthy pause..... no response)	
75	C	Think of something to tell Warwick. If you could change one thing about nurture what would it be?	
76	S1	To have more dragons around the class	(1FI)
77	C	To have more dragons. In nurture?	
78	S1	Yep	
79	C	Anything else that you would change?	
80	S1	Nope	
81	C	So to have more dragons in the class.	
82	S1	More families. Cos Warwick and Bernie and Spike are the only bits of family. I cover these up because the pink one that we got, the new one, he can blow fire but these ones can't.	(1FI-R)
83	C	Oooh. So you don't want	
84	S1	So they come from different families.	
85	C	Aah. And why would you have more dragons?	
86	S1	Because then it's a whole big family and it's proper nurture.	(1MS)
87	C	And what do the dragons do? Why do you have these dragons?	
88	S1	Because they blow fire and help you work harder.	(1BA)
89	C	They help you work harder?	
90	S1	And also, after lighthouse group I thought that maybe we could have a lighthouse around the classroom, our new group, class, the new group, new people, if it's still called the nurture lighthouse, they could colour, they could paint on the walls	(1FI-2)
91	C	That's a good idea	
92	S1	Lighthouses around it	(1FI-2)
93	C	Yeah, Very good idea. Ok. Where would you put on the	

Post-Intervention Transcript,

		scale the nurture group has made a difference for me in school? So for you – number 10? How has it made a difference?	
94	S1	Because now she's got all the dragons it feels much easier, it's made us work more harder in class and not get our names on the board for a whole week. Like this week I've got no name on the board for a whole, whole, whole, whole week.	(1MD, 1RS, 1BA, 1LW, 1IB, 1Rew-D)
95	C	Fantastic! Well done. So the nurture group has made you behave better in class? Yeah. Well done.	
96	S1	Stops you making the wrong choices	(1IB)
97	C	Stops you from making the wrong choices. Wow! That's brilliant isn't it S1? Has the nurture group helped you with anything? What's it helped you with?	
98	S1	Working harder and it's safe, em also they've took daddy in to tell him about my behaviour and good behaviour and then em I think I have been working much harder, they've been, they've been basically, they've been – that now I'm in the highest maths group because I've been working so hard.	(1LW, 1BN, 1IB, 1CP, 1MD, 1LW)
99	C	Fantastic you are doing brilliantly aren't you? OK	
100	S1	I got a class award in my book today.	(1CP)
101	C	Did you? Wow!	
102	S1	Because I was so good.	(1CP, 1IB)
103	C	Well done you. Ok. So the other thing I'm going to ask you.-	
104	S1	He's flying	(1MS)
105	C	Has the nurture group,.. what would you tell other people about the nurture group, so someone who didn't know anything about nurture group.	
106	S1	It's great fun and they help you working, and they do good things and they help you and they make lots of things helpful and then they make it funny, they make you laugh, they make you get prizes out of the tin, they let you do stuff outside, they let you create, they let you play round, they let you run around, they let you go in the tents, they let you go in whatever they have out they let you go on it.	(1ENG, 1F, 1Te, 1LW, 1Rew, 1ACH, 1PL, 1RS)
107	C	Wow – that's a lot of stuff, that you would tell people, lots of good things about nurture wouldn't you? Great, fantastic, so you-	
108	S1	And the teachers are amazing	(1Te)
109	C	You've really enjoyed it have you? Why are the teachers amazing?	
110	S1	Cos they help you with stuff and they let you do stuff that other teachers normally don't.	(1Te)
111	C	Can you think of an example, what kind of things do they let you do?	
112	S1	Put up, like when the, em, what's it called, nursery put up the big tent they let us go in it.	(1RS, 1Te)
113	C	Oh did they? So you were able to play in the tent	
114	S1	And they're putting up a bigger one, about — (giving explanation about the size)	(1RS)
115	C	Fantastic. So you're having lots of fun in there, in nurture	

Post-Intervention Transcript,

Section Two
of Interview

116	S1	I love nurture	(1ENG)
117	C	That's really lovely, I'm glad you've enjoyed it.	
118	S1	It's sad that it's going away now though	1SE
119	C	But like I said you're still going back aren't you? So you won't be in there as much but you're still going to be having a lot of fun and going back to see Mrs XXXX. Ok. This time I'm going to ask, so we've talked before about your reading when I met you last time. Tell me what you've been doing in reading	
120	S1	Well	
121	C	What've you been doing in your reading?	
122	S1	We've been reading, I'm up to level 5 now, but that's the highest one that you can do and I think Miss XXXX has helped me a bit because now she's realised that I've got to slow down a bit and actually take the breaks, and do my breaks and then I've got to take a deep breath and do stuff like that and like mountain climbing I was struggling and she then had to put card down and I followed where she was going across it.	(2P, 2CP, 2TS, 2ST, 2RS.)
123	C	Oh. OK. So she's helped you with your reading so I know that you're in your new nurture group, do you think that's made a difference to your reading? Yeah. How has it made a difference?	
124	S1	Well. I'm up to level 5 in that one, that one's really good and I've been working much harder with level 5.	(2CP, 2WA, 2PDR)
125	C	So how has nurture group helped you with your reading?	
126	S1	Because they've made me, they've got level 5s in their group and they've made me start reading their books.	(2TA)
127	C	So they made you start reading level 5?	
128	S1	Yep	
129	C	And they helped you with your breaks didn't they?	(2ST)
130	S1	Yep. It's like ..	
131	C	Ooh he's got your sticker on	(2MS)
132	S1	No I gave it to him	
133	C	What do you think would help you more with your reading?	
134	S1	To do it up to level 5 and then do it to 10, except 6 and then we could do it much harder.	(2FH)
135	C	But what would help you to improve your reading?	
136	S1	To like be highlighted, the words highlighted	(2FH)
137	C	Does that happen at the moment?	
138	S1	What are up to level 18	(2MS)
139	C	Level 18. Ok so if I asked you on my scale has the nurture group helped you with your reading where would you put it?	
140	S1	Pointing repeatedly.....	(2PDR)
141	C	Number 10. Ok. I'm going to ask you one more question and then we're going to stop and go to break and then we'll come back after	
142	S1	Then can I listen to that? Can I listen to it quickly now	(2MS)
143	C	In a minute. We'll just do one more question before break because I don't want you to miss break	
144	S1	And then can I do that?	

Post-Intervention Transcript,

145	C	Yes. So the next one I'm going to ask you...we've talked... I've talked to you about your writing before, so can you tell me what you've been doing in your writing?	
146	S1	I've been working, I've been writing much better because Mrs XXXX, she's been using, em she's been telling us, we've been doing finger work, it's like cutting paper and twisting things to cut it and stuff like that and using our play dough as plasticine, rolling it round in our hands to give us finger exercises.	(2CP, 2TS, 2TA, 2PDW, 2Res, 2IS)
147	C	Oh. Who've you been doing that with?	
148	S1	All the Miss XXXX.	(2TA, 2TS)
149	C	Miss XXXX. So in nurture again	
150	S1	Yep	
151	C	So that's helped you with your writing has it?	(2PDW)
152	S1	Yep	
153	C	How has it helped? How has it helped you?	(2MS)
154	S1	We have playtimes at different times in Y3	
155	C	I know. We're going after this one because your teacher told me 11. So how has the nurture group helped you with your writing?	(2TS, 2TA)
156	S1	Well, it's, she's been doing much more work for our hands and bits like that.	
157	C	More work for your hands.	(2MS)
158	S1	Did XXXX go on to the next page?	
159	C	Yes. In a minute. Wait a minute. So what would help you a bit more with your writing do you think?	(2AH, 2Res)
160	S1	I think that we should all have them things on the bottom of our pencils, just to like help us.	
161	C	What in your normal classroom? Do you have them in nurture?	
162	S1	Yes	
163	C	So the pencil grips	
164	S1	Yes	
165	C	Would you like to have that in your normal classroom as well?	
166	S1	Yes	
167	C	So on my scale, where would you put it if I asked you has the nurture group helped with your writing	(2PDW)
168	S1	Number 10	
169	C	And why would you choose that one?	(2Res, 2P, 2Pe)
170	S1	Because they have been using the grips and we have been practising with them, like Mrs XXXX Put our names on the top of the pencil and then put things on it and then we was allowed to choose the colour and then we were allowed to write with it and stuff like that.	
171	C	So you've been practising.	(2P)
172	S1	Yep	
173	C	Great. We'll stop there for a break and then we'll come back after	(2MS)
174	S1	Can I listen to this now	
175	C	Yes you can do. I'm just going to stop it.	
176	S1	Stop.	
177	C	OK. So before, we were talking a bit about your reading	

Post-Intervention Transcript,

		and writing, now I'm going to ask you, because I've spoken to you before about talking to other children and adults, do you think that the nurture group has made a difference to that? What have you chosen? Number ten.	(2PDT, 2MS)
178	S1	So's Warwick?	
179	C	Warwick's chosen number ten.	
180	S1	Ten	(2PDT)
181	C	Why did you choose number ten?	
182	S1	Cos they make you have good manners and they give time out, she talks a lot about our behaviour. Miss XXXX talks to us about our bad behaviour. She....mumble	(2ST, 2TA, 2TS, 2IS)
183	C	She what?	
184	S1	Miss did you know, my birthday's on 31 st October.	(2MS)
185	C	Is it? Mmm, so you've just had it on Halloween. So has the new class helped you to talk to people? Has the nurture group helped you to talk to other people? Number nine. Why have you chosen that one?	
186	S1	No, it's number ten.	(2PDT)
187	C	Number ten. Sorry, why did you choose that one?	
188	S1	(Mumble)	
189	C	Why did we choose number ten? How has it helped you talk to other people.	
190	S1	They warn us about our manners. Say, if I was talking badly to the teachers, they would take us out and just explain why we shouldn't do it and stuff like that.	(2ST, 2TA, 2TS, 2SU)
191	C	OK. Stop kicking cos it'll get picked up on the sound and we won't be able to hear you. OK, what do you think would help you a bit more to be able to talk to other people?	
192	S1	If, other people told me how to talk to them, or say if they had feelings and stuff like that, they just talk calmly back.	(2FH)
193	C	So if they were a bit upset, it would help if they were calmer?	
194	S1	I know what we could change in class though; no name	(2FH)
195	C	Sorry?	
196	S1	I know what we could change in class; getting no names on the board.	(2FH, 2TA)
197	C	No names on the board.	
198	S1	Yep	
199	C	OK. I've also talked to you before about your listening, haven't I, and whether you're able to understand in the classroom.	
200	S1	Oh yeah, that's one of our things that we've got to do.	(2P)
201	C	What's that?	
202	S1	Listen	
203	C	So has the nurture group made a difference with your listening and understanding? Yeah? How has it made a difference?	(2PDL)
204	S1	Because Miss always used to warn us about how we should listen but now we're doing listening games every day and stuff like that. Say if I was the teacher and you was the kid and I said we have to ask Warwick now, say one of our favourite things. And right at the end we have to wait for a minute, think about what they said, and	(2PDL, 2TS, 2TA, 2P, 2ST, 2IS)

Post-Intervention Transcript,

		then... say something, say what your favourite film was	
205	C	My favourite film, ooh, is, what is my favourite film? Aladdin.	
206	S1	Charlotte Web's my favourite. Right, now, we have to have a minute or two to forget them and then we have to try and remember them.	(2TA, 2ST)
207	C	Ahh. Yours was Charlotte's Web	
208	S1	And yours was Aladdin	
209	C	Well done! So you practise listening in nurture?	
210	S1	Yep	(2P)
211	C	Ahh. So it's helped you.	
212	S1	And also when XXXX got in a strop, I told him that he could play cos we made a little mistake and I said that he couldn't play but then Miss saidand I said 'Sorry', and that he could play but you've got to be a good boy.	(2TS, 2SU, 2IB, 2CC-IB)
213	C	Ahh. That's lovely. And has it helped you to understand other people? Helped you understand what you're meant to do in the classroom?	
214	S1	Ten percent off.	(2PDL)
215	C	Ten percent off? How has it helped you understand in the classroom?	
216	S1	Because it's telling me that(mumbles)	(2SU)
217	C	I know. It's telling you what?	
218	S1	It's telling me like breaks and stuff like that. And you've got to let people play, and understand, blah blah blah.	(2ST, 2SU)
219	C	OK. So, is there anything that you think would help you with your listening a bit more? Listening and understanding. No? You think you're doing lots anyway?	
220	S1	Yeah, I think that one.	(2NAH)
221	C	And you chose number ten to say that Nurture had helped you.	
222	S1	No, number one	
223	C	No, with your listening, you said it had helped you. Number ten yeah? And you said number one for you don't need anymore help.	
224	S1	Warwick's still got his plaster on.	
225	C	Oh you've given it to him have you. I've got to take him back to Miss XXXX later; he's very affectionate. This time I'm going to ask you, 'How do you feel about reading?' Where would you put that on my scale? Number.. ?	
226	S1	Five.	
227	C	Why have you chosen that one.	
228	S1	Because..... I'm real good at reading.....But I just need highlighted words.	
229	C	So you're good but you just need the highlighted words to help you? Who started doing that with you?	
230	S1	Miss XXXX	
231	C	Miss XXXX in Nurture? OK	
232	S1	Miss XXXX	
233	C	OK. Yes cos they're different aren't they. How do you feel about reading at home? Where would you put that on my scale. Number...?	

Section Three
of Interview
(analysed descriptively
from this point
onwards - focus
on use of scaling).

Post-Intervention Transcript,

234	S1	Ten cos Mummy still reads me sometimes and me and my brother play teachers at school, at home.
235	C	So you like it when your Mum reads to you?
236	S1	And sometimes I read to my little brother.
237	C	What books do you like reading?
238	S1	This is about Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I like Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Little Red Riding Hood and Mickey Mouse Clubhouse, I've got that one up to number ten.
239	C	Have you, and do you read those or does someone else read with you?
240	S1	Look on the top of that tree.
241	C	It's a bit windy isn't it.
242	S1	No, look on the top of that tree.
243	C	What? Oh yeah a little bird.
244	S1	That's a magpie. That gives you bad luck if you only find one.
245	C	Oh you have to salute them if you only see one and then it doesn't work.
246	S1	Better find another one.
247	C	What? Do you read at home or do you read with someone?
248	S1	Both
249	C	Both. And do you like being read to? Do you like having stories? Yeah? Number ten. Ok. Now, oh can I have those back.
250	S1	Nah, he's ate them.
251	C	I need them for other children.
252	S1	He's ate them, 'Spit them out!' (spit)
253	C	Oh, thank you. What a pickle he is, eating all my stickers. Right, this time I'm going to ask you, 'How do you feel about writing? How do you feel about writing; where would you put that on my scale?
254	S1	There but I can't put it cos ...
255	C	Number ten why did you choose that one?
256	S1	Because writing's hard and exciting.
257	C	Do you find it easy or difficult?
258	S1	Easy!.....Do you want it back cos going to spit it out.
259	C	Oh! Thank you young man. Ok. What about if I asked you about spelling?
260	S1	What did he say?
261	C	Whispers, 'I'm not a young man.' Where would you put that on my scale?
262	S1	I don't know. There.
263	C	Number? Number what, I can't see you'll have to...
264	S1	Five
265	C	Right, why would you choose that one?
266	S1	Because I think I'm quite good at spelling.
267	C	Ok. When do you find it hard?
268	S1	When Miss gives us like, sister, to write down. Found another magpie, just went in the tree.
269	C	What about if I asked you how you feel about handwriting. Where would you put that on my scale?

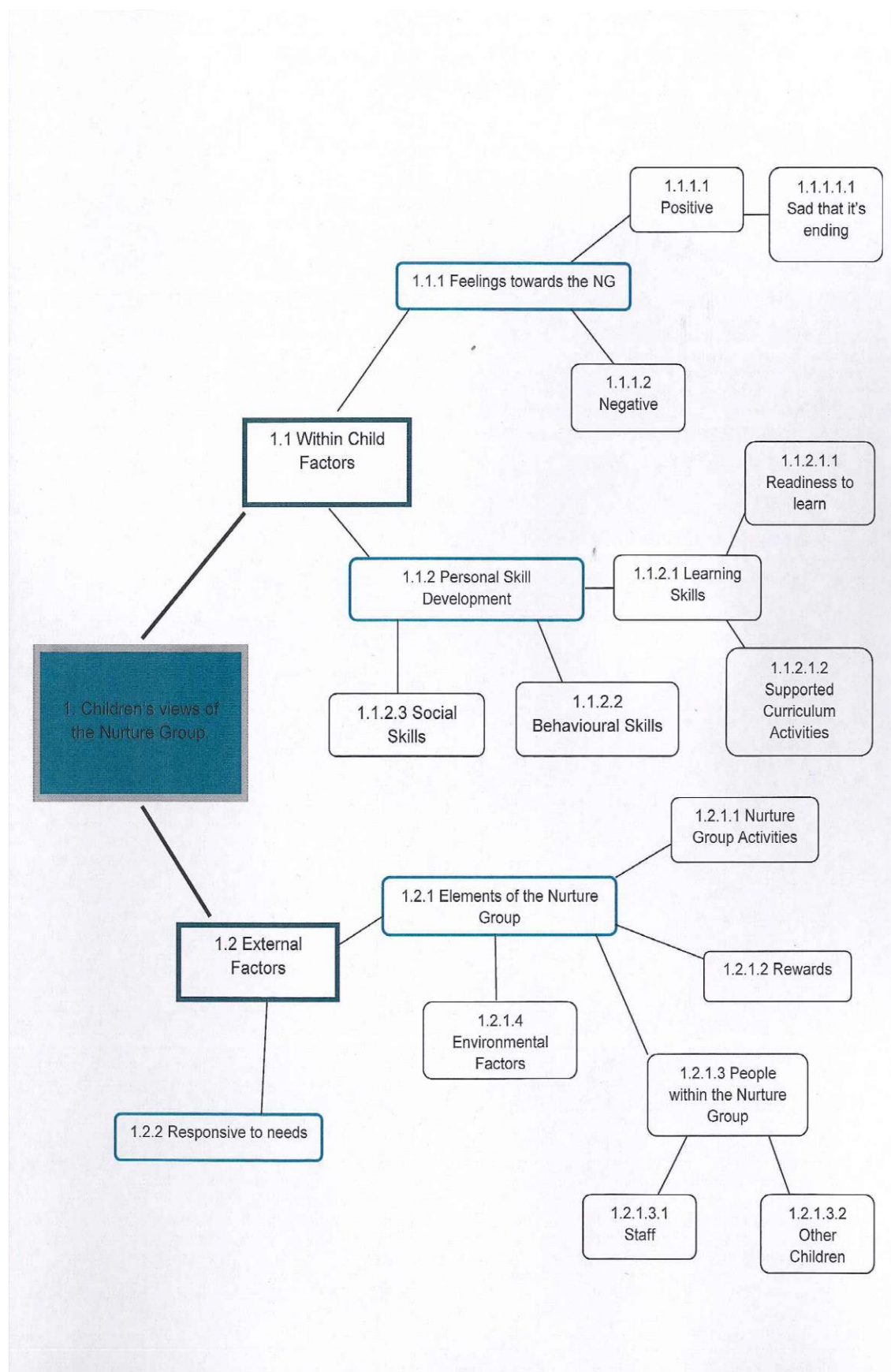
Post-Intervention Transcript,

270	S1	Spit it out. He's going to spit it out.
271	C	Handwriting, where would you put that on my scale?
272	S1	I'd put it on 'happy'.
273	C	Number ten. Why would you pick that one?
274	S1	I like handwriting; all the words that Miss gives us like, happy, fun, ungrateful. Em
275	C	So you like handwriting.
276	S1	On, out, in,
277	C	Do you like handwriting?
278	S1	Horse
279	C	Why do you like it?
280	S1	Horse, horse, horse
281	C	Why do you like handwriting?
282	S1	Do you know I come from Wales... Because there's lots of different things that you can write with handwriting like, dunno, goodbye,...
283	C	So do you find it quite easy?
284	S1	Yes
285	C	Or do you find it difficult?
286	S1	First one
287	C	Easy. What about if I asked you, 'Do you prefer writing about stories, things you've made up, or do you prefer writing about facts, things that you find out about?
288	S1	Facts
289	C	You prefer writing about facts. Why's that?
290	S1	Because she likes it a lot
291	C	Why does she like it
292	S1	Whispers
293	C	Because it's fun?
294	S1	Yes
295	C	Right, this time I'm going to ask you, 'Are you ready? Warwick, are you ready? Are you good at reading? Where would you put that on my scale? Are you good at reading? Number...?
296	S1	That's him, but that one's me.
297	C	Well I need you, not Warwick
298	S1	He's got five. Warwick put five down, I put ten.
299	C	So you've chosen number ten; you are good at reading. Why did you choose that one?
300	S1	Because I think ten's good enough for me. Ten, stories is good fun.
301	C	Remember the question. Listen I need you to concentrate. Right sit up for me properly.
302	S1	Warwick says he's got your reading
303	C	Come on, sit up
304	S1	He's got your reading
305	C	Well I need you to sit nicely before he can help you.
306	S1	He's got your reading.
307	C	Ok well we'll have to wait cos you're not listening carefully. You chose number ten. Why did you choose that one?
308	S1	Because it's, because it's fun and you can find out different things like information books you can find out

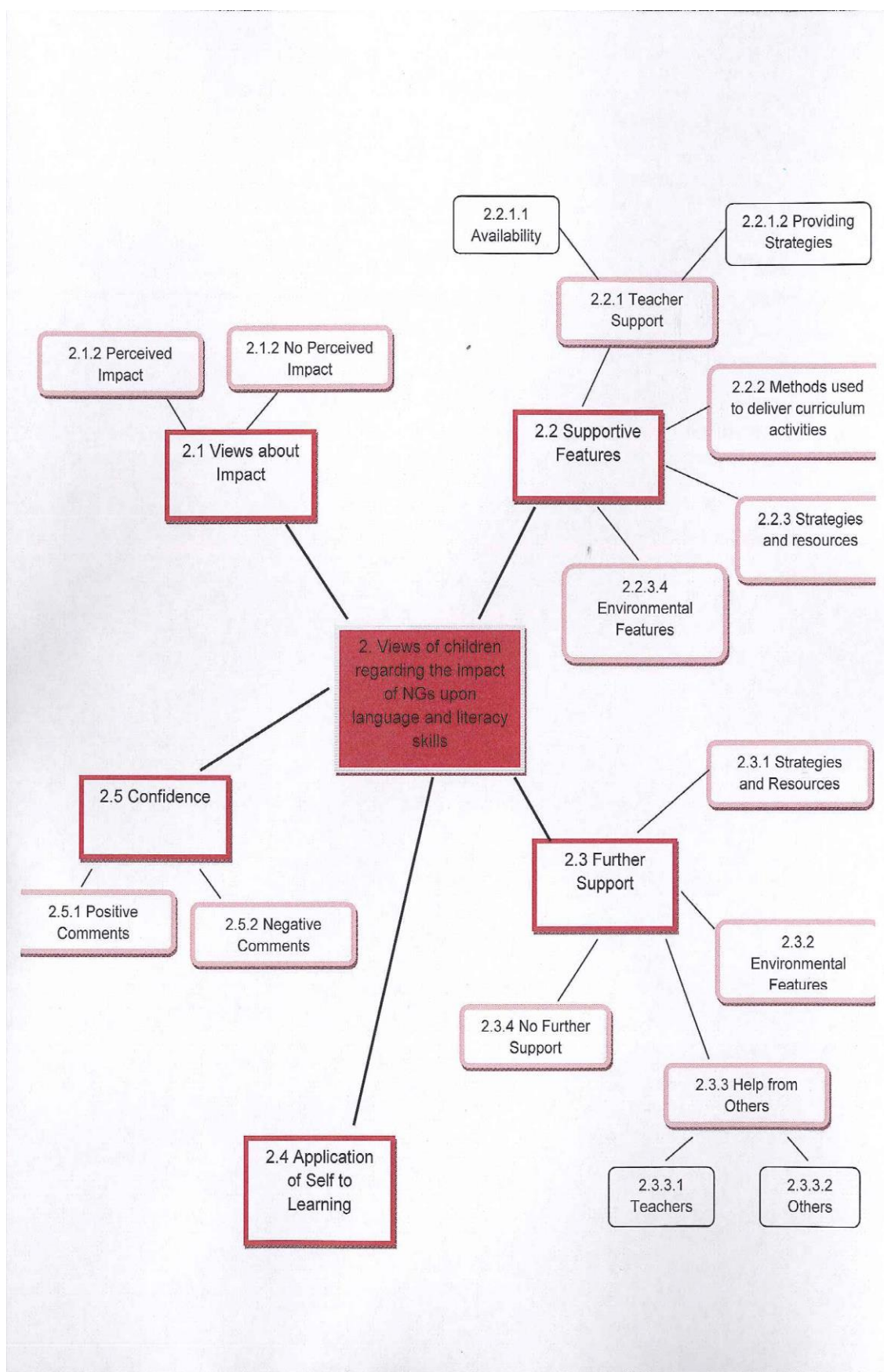
Post-Intervention Transcript,

		about your body, and you can find out about dragons.
309	C	When are you good at reading
310	S1	Quiet reading
311	C	Quiet reading
312	S1	And reading with teachers
313	C	And when do you find it hard
314	S1	Eh, when we don't have a lot of help. When they're big, big, big, big books you can't read it. And it's in a different language.
315	C	Do you know your letter sounds
316	S1	Yeah
317	C	Yeah and what are you able to read words
318	S1	(Recites alphabet)
319	C	Are you able to read words

Appendix 15: A Thematic Map for Section One of Children's Interviews



Appendix 16: A Thematic Map for Section Two of Children's Interviews



Appendix 17: Collated Data Extracts for the Subordinate Subtheme 'Sad that it's Ending'.

67	C	You don't hate anything, fantastic, so nothing you don't like. Have you always felt like that about nurture? Have you always liked it?
68	S2	Yeah, but but when it's gone past Christmas we're never going to nurture sadly.
69	C	Well you're still going to see Miss XXXX aren't you and I think that they're going to be inviting you back aren't they to say hello so you will be going, you'll just be popping in to visit.
70	S2	And they definitely going to invite me for snack time cos they know I love it.
71	C	Yeah I know, they're going to ask you to come in for snack time aren't they. But also it's time for you to go back to classrooms isn't it cos you're doing so well, so that's brilliant. Okay so the next thing I'm going to ask you about is have you had fun in nurture?

46	S1	Because I love Nurture but I'm sad that it's going to be stopped
47	C	Are you. Bit sad, but it's not stopping altogether, is it? You're still going to be having time with Mrs XXXX. Yeah? They're going to be asking you back, to say hello, every so often. Yeah? What do you like about Nurture Group?

80	S8	Have snack twice; well actually it wouldn't be snack twice a day cos I won't be here after Christmas, so I don't know, more snack.
81	C	So you're going back into your other class are you?
82	S8	Yeah after Christmas forever.
83	C	Are you looking forward to that?
84	S8	No, I want to stay in my old class.
85	C	You want to stay-
86	S8	But I may keep on popping in to say hello.
87	C	You're going to keep popping in to say hello, so that will be nice you'll still get to see everyone.
88	S8	Yeah

118	S1	It's sad that it's going away now though
119	C	But like I said you're still going back aren't you? So you won't be in there as much but you're still going to be having a lot of fun and going back to see Mrs XXXX.

Improvements related to the environment and resources

Interviewer: Is there anything that you think could make nurture better?

Ella: Mmm probably have more space.

Interviewer: More space, to do what?

Ella: To have like, so we could sit down and have a circle, when I was in there we had all the tables in the way.

Jessica: And also, after lighthouse group I thought that maybe we could have a lighthouse around the classroom, our new group, class, the new group, new people, if it's still called the nurture lighthouse, they could colour, they could paint on the walls.

Interviewer: That's a good idea.

Jessica: Lighthouses around it.

Interviewer: Yeah, very good idea.

Interviewer: That's fine. Is there anything that could make nurture better?

Tom: Yes, by having sofas cos Miss XXXX said we're going to have sofas.

Interviewer: So it would be great to have sofas in nurture.

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about nurture what would it be?

Jack: The play area.

Interviewer: What would you change about the play area?

Jack: I don't know.

Improvements related to the group composition- staff and children

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about nurture what would it be?

Daniel: Err, one thing, get my friends in there.

Interviewer: Ahh. I see, anything else that you could change so you could make it better?

Harry: Ehh. Have more people in nurture group; like 10.

Interviewer: What so a few more people?

Harry: MmmHmm

Interviewer: What could make it better in the group? I'd like you to be sensible.

Daniel: Ummmm, I don't know.

Interviewer: Have a think, if you don't like it there must be something that could make it better.

Daniel: Umm, more generous.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Daniel: Like more kind, and more generous, and everything.

Interviewer: Is there anything that could make nurture group a bit better?

Lucy: Not really, I would like another teacher in our class, and I would like 8 teachers in our class one for each person so then you don't have to share.

Interviewer: Good. Is there anything that could make nurture group better?

Harry: MmmHmm. Have 3 teachers.

Improvements related to the reward systems

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about nurture what would it be?

Jessica: To have more dragons around the class.

Interviewer: To have more dragons. In nurture?

Jessica: Yep

Interviewer: Anything else that you would change?

Jessica: Nope.

Interviewer: So to have more dragons in the class.

Jessica: More families. Cos XXXX and XXXX and XXXX are the only bits of family. I cover these up because the pink on that we got, the new one, he can blow fire but these one's can't.

Interviewer: Ooh. So you don't want....

Jessica: So they come from different families.

Interviewer: Aah. And why would you have more dragons?

Jessica: Because then it's a whole big family and its proper nurture.

Interviewer: And what do the dragons do? Why do you have these dragons?

Jessica: Because they blow fire and help you work harder.

Interviewer: Can you think of anything else that might make it better?

Harry: Ehh have 4, 4 dragons.

Interviewer: 4 dragons, why would you want to have 4 dragons?

Harry: Cos it'd be more peaceful....and four people could take the four dragons.

Interviewer: Oh, so you'd have more chance.

Harry: Red, blue and a gold one there then a green one.

Improvements related to the NG activities

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about nurture what would it be?

Lucy: Have snack twice; well actually it wouldn't be snack twice a day cos I won't be here after Christmas, so I don't know, more snack.

Interviewer: Ok. Is there anything that you would change? If you could change one thing about nurture, what would it be?

Harry: Ehh. Biscuit Thursday.

Interviewer: Biscuit Thursday? Why would you change that?

Harry: Cos biscuits are not really healthy.

Interviewer: Ah, so you'd have something healthier.

Harry: Yeah like apples and fruit. We have got apples and fruit but I like oranges, lemons.